Resolution No. 48-19

RESOLUTION to Adopt the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

TO THE HONORABLE SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY BOARD OF THE COUNTY OF POLK:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

WHEREAS, Polk County has updated the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for the period of 2020-2024 and

WHEREAS, said updated plan outlines foreseeable goals and outdoor recreation facility needs: and

WHEREAS, the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan is necessary as supporting documentation for all county and municipal cost sharing and grant applications submitted to the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on November 20, 2019, the Polk County Environmental Services Committee has approved and forwarded the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan to the Polk County Board of Supervisors for adoption.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Polk County Board of Supervisors hereby adopts and approves the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan located on the Polk County Web Site at: https://www.co.polk.wi.us/fpt.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan be placed on file for public inspection in the Office of the Polk County Clerk.

BY: Brad Olson

Brad Olson, Supervisor, District #1

Doug Route

Doug Route, Supervisor, District #2

Dean Johansen, Chair,
Supervisor, District #3,

Chris Nelson, Supervisor, District #4

Tracy LaBlanc

Tracy LaBlanc, Supervisor, District #5

Brian Masters, Supervisor, District #6

James S Edgell

James Edgell, Supervisor, District #8

Kim O'Connell, Supervisor, District #9

Larry Jepsen, Supervisor, District #10

Jay Luke, 1st Vice Chair,
Supervisor, District #11

Michael Larsen, Supervisor, District #12

Russell Arcand, Supervisor, District #13

Michael Prichard, Supervisor, District #7

John Bonneprise, 2nd Vice Chair, Supervisor, District #14

Joe Demulling, Supervisor, District #15

Interim County Administrator's Note:

Recommended

Malia Malone
Interim County Administrator

Fiscal Impact Note:
This resolution has no immediate fiscal impact. However, the projects proposed in this plan are expected to be funded through grants in the next five years.

Maggie Wickre, Finance Director

Approved as to Form and Execution:

Joseph Loso, Interim Corporation Counsel

Legal Impact Note:

Excerpt of Minutes

At its regular business meeting on the 17 of Dec 2019, the Polk County Board of Supervisors acted upon Resolution No. 48-19: Resolution to adopt the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

- ☐ Adopted by a majority of the members present by a vote of _____ in favor and _____ against.
- ☒ Adopted by unanimous voice vote.
- ☐ Adopted as amended. See Below.
- ☐ Defeated
- ☐ Other: _____

Insert amendment to resolution according to minutes: "Whereas, the Polk County Board of Supervisors intends to update the scope of the future Outdoor Recreation Plan to make it a document that thoroughly reviews relevant outdoor recreation in the county, obtains quality input from outdoor recreation stakeholders, provides prioritization of outdoor recreation opportunities and will be used for decision making on uses and funding of outdoor recreation opportunities".

SIGNED BY: ATTEST:

Dean Johansen, County Board Chairperson Sharon Jorgenson, County Clerk

Executive Summary

The Polk County Comprehensive Recreation Plan expired in June of 2019. The 2020-2024 Comprehensive Recreation Plan was rewritten to outline five year goals and priorities for outdoor recreation within Polk County. This document serves as the mechanism for the Wisconsin DNR to approve many of the grants that are written by the Parks Department on an annual basis.

CERTIFIED COPY OF POLK COUNTY RESOLUTION

STATE OF WISCONSIN

COUNTY OF POLK

I Sharon E. Jorgenson, Polk County Clerk do hereby certify that the attached hereto and incorporated herein is a full, true and correct copy of Resolution No. 48-19: Resolution to Adopt the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan adopted by the Polk County Board of Supervisors at its regular business meeting held on December 17, 2019.

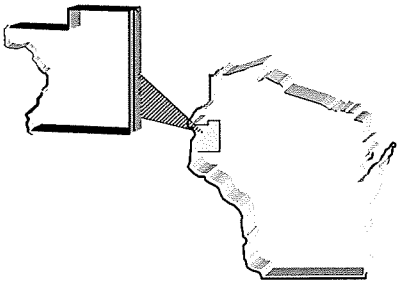
Sharon E. Jorgenson 12/17/19

Sharon E. Jorgenson, Polk County Clerk Date

POLK COUNTY
OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

2020 – 2024

Polk County -
Gift of the Glaciers



Polk County
Outdoor Recreation Plan
2020-2024

Polk County Environmental Services Committee:

Kim O'Connell – Chairperson
Brad Olson – Vice Chair
Tracy LaBlanc
Doug Route
Lyle Doolittle- FSA Representative
Jim Edgell

Prepared by:

Polk County Forestry and Parks Department
Land Information Department

November 2019

ABSTRACT

TITLE: 2020-2024 POLK COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN
Effective January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2024

SUBJECT: This report assesses the existing recreation system in Polk County, identifies recreation needs based upon public input and recreation standards, sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating recreation plans, and establishes recommendations for improving the recreation system over the next five years.

Submission of this report to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the County and local units of government for a variety of Federal and State Aids. Non-profit groups, foundations, and the general public may also use this document to coordinate their own private efforts for developing outdoor recreation facilities.

DATE: November 2019

AGENCY: Polk County Parks Department
100 Polk County Plaza
Suite 10
Balsam Lake, WI 54810

CONTACT: Steve Geiger, Director
Polk County Land Information, Parks, Forestry,
715-485-9294

I.
Copy of the adopted resolution approving the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan

Resolution No. 48-19

RESOLUTION to Adopt the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

TO THE HONORABLE SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY BOARD OF THE COUNTY OF POLK:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

WHEREAS, Polk County has updated the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan for the period of 2020-2024 and

WHEREAS, said updated plan outlines foreseeable goals and outdoor recreation facility needs: and

WHEREAS, the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan is necessary as supporting documentation for all county and municipal cost sharing and grant applications submitted to the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on November 13, 2019, the Polk County Environmental Services Committee has approved and forwarded the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan to the Polk County Board of Supervisors for adoption.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Polk County Board of Supervisors hereby adopts and approves the 2020-2024 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan located on the Polk County Web Site at: https://www.co.polk.wi.us/fpt.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan be placed on file for public inspection in the Office of the Polk County Clerk.

BY: _____
Brad Olson, Supervisor, District #1

_____
Doug Route, Supervisor, District #2

_____
Dean Johansen, Chair,
Supervisor, District #3,

_____
Chris Nelson, Supervisor, District #4

_____
James Edgell, Supervisor, District #8

_____
Kim O'Connell, Supervisor, District #9

_____
Larry Jepsen, Supervisor, District #10

_____
Jay Luke, 1st Vice Chair,
Supervisor, District #11

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Brian Masters, Supervisor, District #6

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Michael Larsen, Supervisor, District #12

Russell Arcand, Supervisor, District #13

John Bonneprise, 2nd Vice Chair, Supervisor, District #14

Joe Demulling, Supervisor, District #15

Interim County Administrator's Note:

Malia Malone
Interim County Administrator

Fiscal Impact Note:
This resolution has no immediate fiscal impact. However, the projects proposed in this plan are expected to be funded through grants in the next five years.

Maggie Wickre, Finance Director

Approved as to Form and Execution:

Joseph Loso, Interim Corporation Counsel

Legal Impact Note:

Excerpt of Minutes

At its regular business meeting on the ____of _____ 2019, the Polk County Board of Supervisors acted upon Resolution No. ____-19: Resolution

_____

_____

☐ Adopted by a majority of the members present by a vote of _____ in favor and _____ against.

☐ Adopted by unanimous voice vote.

- ☐ Adopted as amended. See Below.
- ☐ Defeated
- ☐ Other: _____

Insert amendment to resolution according to minutes:

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III.
INTRODUCTION

The official Polk County Vision Statement is to:

"Improve the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in Polk County."

Recreation is an important part of our lives. Increasing demands for outdoor recreation opportunities have led to increasing pressure on existing recreation facilities. To meet the demands that are being placed on these facilities, communities are expected to provide additional facilities or improvements that afford residents and tourists a wide range of quality recreation opportunities. Communities are also expected to provide these facilities in a manner that maintains the character and quality of life and the quality of the environment in which they live. Consequently, there is a need to provide for increasing recreation demands while protecting and enhancing the various resources for future generations.

The Need for Recreation

Taken from the 2017 National Recreation and Park Association Survey. National results.

- **Americans, on average, visit their local park and recreation facilities almost twice a month. Nearly seven in 10 survey respondents report having visited a local park and/or recreation facility within a month of participating in the survey, including nearly half having done so within the previous seven days. Millennials and parents are more frequent park users.**

- **Eighty-five percent of Americans consider high-quality park and recreation amenities as an important factor when they are choosing a new place to live.**

- **More than nine in 10 Americans agree that parks and recreation is an important service their local governments deliver.**

- **The reasons Americans visit their local park and recreation facilities are as diverse as they are: a place to be with family and friends, to be more physically active, to be closer to nature, to access quality, affordable child care, mental health and to learn a new skill or craft.**

- **What keeps people from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities is a lack of time, concerns about safety at and walking to/from the park, and a lack of awareness of park locations/offerings.**

- **Four in five Americans agree that NRPA's Three Pillars — Conservation, Health and Wellness, and Social Equity — represent what they see as the priorities for their local park and recreation agency.**

- **Ninety-five percent of Americans agree that it is important that their local government acts to protect the natural environment, including acquiring, constructing and maintaining local parks, trails and green spaces.**

- **Eighty-seven percent of Americans support their local government and park and recreation agency in investing in critical infrastructure that would make their regions more resilient and would improve their community's ability to withstand or recover quickly from natural disasters.**

PLAN PURPOSE

An important step in providing quality recreation opportunities is proper planning. Limited budgets at all levels of government and private agencies require that the most appropriate facility be placed in the most suitable location in order to meet the specific needs of the area that it is intended to serve.

Essential to this planning process is the development of the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Plan is intended to serve as a guide for the development of parks and outdoor recreation facilities in Polk County. It is an update of the *2014-2019 Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan* and insures the continuation of an orderly procedure to identify and evaluate the need for additional or improved recreation facilities. The Plan will also provide the Polk County Board, Environmental Services Committee and other local decision-making agencies and organizations with:

- Information on the status and condition of current outdoor recreation facilities;
- A foundation for coordinating recreation facility development and improvement projects; and
- The ability to participate in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Stewardship Program and other related funding programs.

The Stewardship Program, and related components, can be used to assist in the acquisition and development of new outdoor recreation facilities, as well as for the improvement of existing recreational facilities.

For instance, adoption of this plan by the Polk County Board, and subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR), will continue eligibility of the county and its local units of government for the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF), Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP), Urban Green Space Program (UGS) and Urban Rivers Grant Program (URGP). Adoption by all municipalities is not necessary if they wish to cooperate with Polk County to use this plan for grant applications. Local government grant applications have a better chance of approval if Polk County applies on their behalf.

Non-profit conservation organizations (NCOs) are eligible to participate in the Knowles–Nelson Stewardship Program under the Urban Green Space and Aids for the Acquisition and

Development of Local Parks programs. NCOs may adopt or carry out recommendations from a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan of the local unit of government in which the NCO project is located or use their land management plans that are required for participation in the stewardship programs.

Statutory Basis

This Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) was prepared pursuant to Wisconsin Statute §23.30 Outdoor Recreation Program. This section serves to "promote, encourage, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive long-range plan to acquire, maintain, and develop for public use, those areas of the state best adapted to the development of a comprehensive system of state and local outdoor recreation facilities and services..."

Submission of this adopted ORP to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the county and local units of government to apply for a variety of Federal and State Aids for outdoor recreation (Chapter NR 50.06(4), Wisconsin administrative code).

Plan Components

This plan addresses the outdoor recreation needs for Polk County. Background information on Polk County was compiled to develop an understanding of the environmental and social characteristics of the county and their meaning for outdoor recreation. An inventory of existing recreational facilities exists in Section IX of this plan. The existing recreation system was analyzed to determine current and potential future deficiencies through the year 2024. A combination of public input assessments and site visits were utilized to define recreational and open space needs. Goals and objectives were created to guide the direction of recreational planning efforts within Polk County.

Provisions for Updating

An essential characteristic of any planning program is that it be on going and flexible. Periodic updating of the plan is necessary for continued refinement and course correction in the planning program. Some of the planning recommendations will not be accomplished within this five year plan period, and additional recommendations may be added as new recreational activities come into demand or the status of existing facilities change. Review the plan recommendations and action programs on an annual basis or more often if deemed necessary. At the time of this review process the town boards, city and village councils, school districts, and other interested parties may be notified to request input. Obtain the following information for consideration in updating the plan:

1. Improvements needed to existing facilities.
2. Demand for new facilities.
3. Potential projects to fulfill this demand, and project sponsor.

The Environmental Services Division review of this information and evaluation will determine the need for proposed projects based on standards and priorities as outlined in this plan.

Updating the entire plan every five years is necessary to assure that the plan reflects changes in the recreational needs of the county and to maintain the county's eligibility for grant programs.

IV.
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following sections of this plan demonstrate the increasing demand for outdoor recreational facilities in Polk County. With increases in population, development, and resource use come the risks of damage, depletion, and even destruction of our natural resource base. Considering these conditions and trends, this section provides general recommendations for the conservation, use, and improvement of our recreational system.

POLK COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT MISSION:

To develop, maintain and preserve our park, lake access, and trail systems that will meet the needs of our citizens and future generations; preserve and protect the county's open space, water, historical, natural and economic resources and provide recreation and tourism opportunities that are designed to enhance Polk County residents' quality of life.

The above mission will be accomplished in the context of the County government's overall mission statement:

'The mission of Polk County Government is to serve and represent the public with integrity.'

POLK COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION GOALS

This outdoor recreation plan for Polk County is designed to provide an achievable program for meeting the county's outdoor recreation needs. Agreement on basic goals is necessary to establish the general direction for developing this program. The overall program recommendations later in this section, the activity-specific recommendations in Section IX, and the facility-specific recommendation should all support the following goals.

Goal: **Provide a variety of recreational facilities and activities for persons of all ages and abilities in a manner which balances recreation and conservation values, while taking advantage of tourism opportunities:**

Goal: **Promote greater awareness of the parks, trails and natural areas that enhance appreciation of our rural community.**

Goal: **Through the coordinated efforts of private and public recreation interests, protect the resources upon which our recreational activities depend in an efficient and cost-feasible manner.**

Goal: **Involve and engage the public in the development, maintenance, and improvement of our outdoor recreation resources and facilities through volunteerism, advocacy, and friends' groups.**

Goal: Investigate and establish recreational trail connections. Maintain and rehabilitate existing recreational trails.

OVERALL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations, as well as those found within Sections IX and XI, are based on generally accepted program activities. The scope of these recommendations is large and may be beyond the immediate financial capability of the county. All recommendations are not intended for implementation during the five-year planning horizon, nor are the recommendations prioritized.

Implementation of plan recommendations will be contingent upon county priorities, feasibility, and available resources and opportunities (e.g., grants, partnerships, available land, and staff resources).

However, there are several areas in which the county government is the only agency in the fortunate position of being able to act before many problems develop. Action can be taken in these areas before patterns of use and development are fixed to such as extent that pressures make change almost impossible.

Programmatic Actions

1. **Balancing Demands.** Meeting the recreation demands of county residents should be given preference over demands originating from outside the county, though potential economic and tourism benefits should be considered in decision-making. Care will be taken to balance and provide for both passive and active recreational needs.

2. **Coordination with Private Enterprise.** Polk County will not unduly compete with but will cooperate with private enterprise in the provision of its outdoor recreation amenities. Private enterprise is better suited to provide many specialized facilities to the public (e.g., golf clubs, marinas). Polk County should continue to provide a leadership role in the protection of our natural resources to ensure commercial recreation interests do not deplete or unduly threaten the quality natural resources upon which we all depend.

3. **Program Development.** With increasing population, the demand for and use of county park facilities is also increasing. Greater operational funding may be required to prevent deterioration of existing facilities, while additional new facilities will be needed in the future. However, in developing a recreation program, care should be taken that the annual cost of maintenance does not exceed an amount the county can afford or is willing to pay. Planned recreational system improvements should be prioritized and integrated into a county multi-year capital improvements program, subject to annual review.

4. **Leverage Available Resources.** Polk County should take full advantage of state and federal financial and technical aid programs in meeting recreational needs. The county's outdoor recreation plan should be updated every five years to maintain eligibility for grant funding.

Partnerships with local communities, private enterprise, land owners, and other interested parties should be promoted and fully explored in order to maximize all available resources. When opportunities arise, work with Polk County Historical Society to integrate sites, events, and materials of historical interest into recreational programming.

4. **Public Outreach.** Polk County Parks Department will continue to publish and distribute informational materials on the county's outdoor recreation amenities through the county website, frequently updated brochures, periodic press releases to local media, and working in conjunction with the Polk County Information Center. In addition, the County has completed an interactive recreational viewer for users to access information about all County recreational opportunities at: https://www.co.polk.wi.us/recreationviewer/

Land Use Actions

1. **Coordination with Other Plans.** It is imperative that outdoor recreational programs are consistent with other planning efforts and related regulations, including the County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Polk County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, soil and water conservation plans, and applicable state and federal plans. Planning and official mapping can be used to protect valued resources and potential future park sites while mitigating potential land use conflicts. As part of the subdivision review process, encourage the dedication of open spaces and/or public park lands and encourage subdivision design which prevents the fragmentation of resources.

2. **Scenic Preservation**. The county's rural scenic quality is a core component of maintaining a quality outdoor recreation experience. Applicable regulations should be enforced to prevent unsightly visual intrusions. Quarry sites should be reclaimed and restored once extraction operations are terminated. Past county outdoor recreation plans have recommended the development of a scenic easement preservation program to protect those key areas offering these greatest visual enjoyments.

3. **Waterfront Protection.** Continue to enforce applicable county regulations which mitigate water use conflicts and protect our surface water resources. Classify the county's lakes and integrate related regulatory measures into applicable ordinances. Polk County residential density around all the County's lakes continues to increase. The Polk County Shoreland and Protection Zoning Ordinance recommends limiting clearing to 35% of the total lot area to preserve water quality, aesthetics and other natural biological community components. Continue to require the dedication of public access to surface waters as part of waterfront development proposals. Prevent development in floodplain areas and promote programs which prevent streambank erosion. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Lake Associations, County Land and Water resources staff as well as Lake Districts to protect water quality and coordinate water-related recreational activities

V.
DEFINITIONS

ADLP- Acquisition and Development of Local Parks

CDRE- Polk County Conservation, Development, Recreation and Education Committee

LWCF- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program

NCO- Non-profit Conservation Organization

ORP- Outdoor Recreation Plan

SCORP-State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

UGS- Urban Green Space Program

URGP- Urban Rivers Grant Program

WIDNR- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

VI.
PLANNING PROCESS

The Polk County Environmental Services Committee and Polk County Department of Parks and Forestry, were the primary sources of input for the development of the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan. Information about existing facilities and programs and the condition of the facilities was gathered through interviews with the Environmental Service Committee, Department personnel, and through on-site inspection of the facilities. Additional data was obtained from previous studies and inventories, published documents, and outdoor recreation plans that were completed for Polk County.

The Polk County Environmental Services Committee will be responsible for providing recommendations to the Polk County Board of Supervisors that ensure that the implementation of the Plan is consistent with the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies.

Plan Amendments

This Plan may be amended as necessary to meet community needs and address changing conditions to prolong the effectiveness of the parent plan. Plan amendments should require formal approval of the Polk County Board of Supervisors after consideration of an advisory recommendation from the Polk County Environmental Services Committee.

VII.
SUMMARY OF PAST OUTDOOR REC PLANS

Polk County has been involved with outdoor recreation plans since the 1990s when 'An Outdoor Recreation Plan for Polk County' was compiled. Later, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission updated several plans up to the year 2013.

Additional plans and laws that affect outdoor recreation in Polk County are referenced below:

- ***Polk County Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2009-2029***
- ***Polk County Park Ordinances (Chapter 1 Title 12)***
- ***Polk County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2006-2020***
- ***Wisconsin DNR Recreation Opportunity Analysis 2017***
- ***Polk County Land and Water Resource Management Plan 2016-2020***
- ***Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2017-2022***
- ***State Trails Network Plan***
- ***Wisconsin Land Legacy Report 2006-2056***
- ***Complete Streets Law***

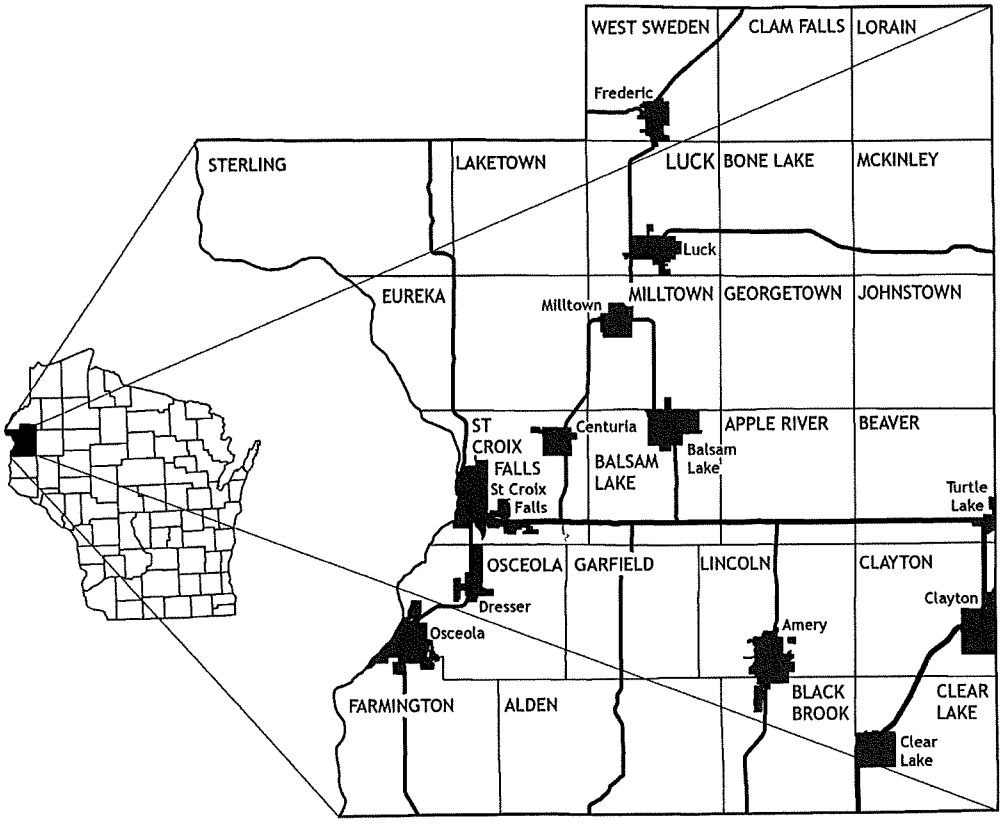
VIII.
DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING REGION

The first step in the development of the Plan is to understand the natural environment in which recreation is going to occur and the people that are going to be involved in these activities. The following are descriptions of the physical landscape, population, and economic characteristics of Polk County.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Polk County is in west-central Wisconsin along the Minnesota-Wisconsin border (see Map 1). The county has a total area of 619,520 acres, or 968 square miles, of combined land and water area. The county is bordered on the west by the St. Croix River, the north by Burnett County, the east by Barron County and the south by St. Croix County. The Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area borders Polk County to the south and west.

Map 1. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION—POLK COUNTY



Polk County is comprised of all or parts of 36 civil divisions, consisting of 24 towns, 10 villages, and 2 cities. This includes the Village of Turtle Lake that lies almost exclusively in Barron County. The Village of Balsam Lake, population 1,019, is the county seat. The largest community is the City of Amery, which has 2,878 people, followed closely by the village of Osceola with 2629 people in 2018.

The climate of Polk County is classified as mid-latitude continental. Warm humid summers and cold snowy winters are the main characteristics. The average monthly temperature ranges from 15 degrees Fahrenheit in January to 73 degrees Fahrenheit in July. Annual precipitation averages 32 inches, with approximately two-thirds of this occurring as rain. Seasonal snowfall ranges from 12 to 75 inches.

PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE

Local areas of Polk County are part of larger geographic structures sharing some common characteristics or connections. Physically, the county is part of the "Central Plain" and "Western Upland" physiographic regions of Wisconsin. The Central Plain region extends southeasterly from northern Polk County to south-central Wisconsin and then northeasterly to Marinette County and the Michigan border. The Western Upland region extends parallel to the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers from Polk County to the Illinois border and to the east for 30 to 75 miles.

Surface Geology

The surface geology of Polk County is primarily the result of glacial deposition over bedrock. The modern landscape was most strongly influenced by the glaciers that invaded the county from about 25,000 to 15,000 years ago from the north and northwest and by a glacier that moved into the county from the west about 12,300 years ago. Since the last period of glacial activity, the landscape has been further sculpted by naturally occurring and man-induced erosion and drainage activity.

During the last major glacial advance, the Wisconsin stage, ice covered all of Polk County except the southeast corner. This glacial activity has left thick glacial deposits that form the primary geologic characteristics of the county.

Landforms produced by glacial activity include a diverse landscape ranging from broad, nearly level glacial outwash plains to rough, broken glacial moraines and areas of pitted outwash. The moraines are rough and broken, having abrupt hills and short, steep ridges near depressions, many of which have no outlets. Between the moraines, the landscape is more nearly level, especially in the central part of the county. Large outwash plains, formed from material carried and deposited by glacial melt water, are mostly level or undulating but in some areas are also pitted with depressions. Lakes, ponds, and bogs are common in the depressions in the moraines and areas of pitted outwash.

The most conspicuous glacial features of Polk County are two terminal moraines which extend from the southwest to the northeast. Terminal moraines mark the furthest advance of a lobe of glacial ice. Moraines are generally rough hills with numerous undrained depressions. These

depressions, or kettles, were caused by voids left when ice blocks buried in the drift melted. Many of these kettles in Polk County are presently small lakes or swamps. The eastern-most terminal moraine extends from New Richmond through Clear Lake and on to Turtle Lake. The other terminal moraine extends from a point east of St. Croix Falls to the northeast corner of the county, near Indian Creek. Between these moraines, the surface is gently rolling to level with poorly developed drainage and many lakes.

The land southeast of the eastern terminal moraine is covered with drift from earlier glacial activity. Because this drift is older, it has been thinned out and leveled off by erosion over a longer period. Subsequently, this area is characterized by slopes that are long and gentle, and well-developed drainage. The northwestern portion of the county is level sand and gravel deposits. This area, which is mostly forested, is known as the "Pine Barrens." Throughout the eastern part of the county are scattered small areas of nearly level and gently sloping glacial lacustrine plains. This area was formed through the sedimentation of old glacial lakes. The St. Croix River Valley, along the western extreme of the county, was a major glacial drainage way as the glaciers melted and receded.

Topography

Generally, the topography of Polk County is moderately rolling, becoming increasingly more rugged in the western portion of the county, particularly in the St. Croix River valley. Surface features have been formed or modified by two distinct periods of glaciation. Pitted glacial outwash covers much of the county, resulting in many lakes, wetlands, and areas of uneven topography. A series of glacial end moraines traverse the county from southwest to northeast. The area between the moraines is quite level and much of the county's best agricultural land is found here.

A band of trap rock (an intrusive igneous rock) is exposed at several points between Dresser and the Clam Falls area. Exposed dolomite limestone is found in the southwest part of the county, and the exposed sandstone bedrock in the area known as The Dalles of the St. Croix is largely responsible for the scenic beauty in this area.

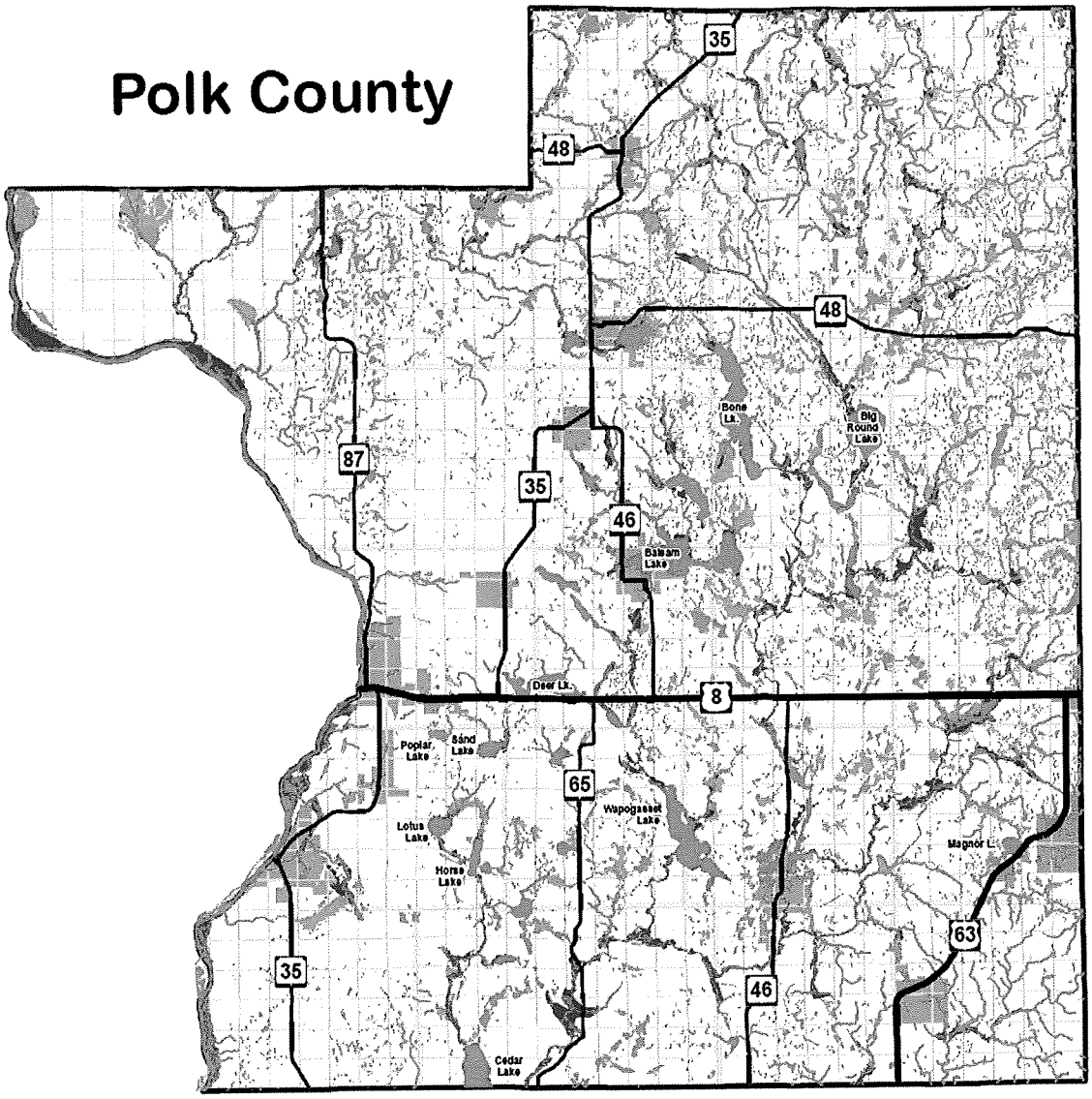
Local relief in Polk County is over 600 feet, ranging from 680 feet above mean sea level at the St. Croix River on the county's western extreme to over 1,400 feet in the north-central and eastern areas.

Hydrology

Polk County has a total surface water area of 22,626 acres consisting of 437 lakes (20,900 acres) and about 200 miles of rivers and streams. These surface water resources of Polk County are shown in Map 2 on the next page.

Polk County is almost entirely within the St. Croix River Basin, except for a small part of the southeast corner of the county lying within the Chippewa River Basin. The St. Croix River is the county's most significant surface water feature, bordering the county along the length of its western border. The River has been designated by Congress as the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

MAP 2. Surface Waters of Polk County



POLK COUNTY

Logo Courtesy of:
Polk County Tourism

WATER RESOURCES

- River and Streams
- Lakes and Rivers
- Floodplain (100 Year)
- Wetlands

Sources: FEMA and WisDNR 2010

NORTH

Miles

0 3 6

Prepared by: County of Polk, Wisconsin, Department of Land Information, Division of Geographic Information Systems

Natural Resources

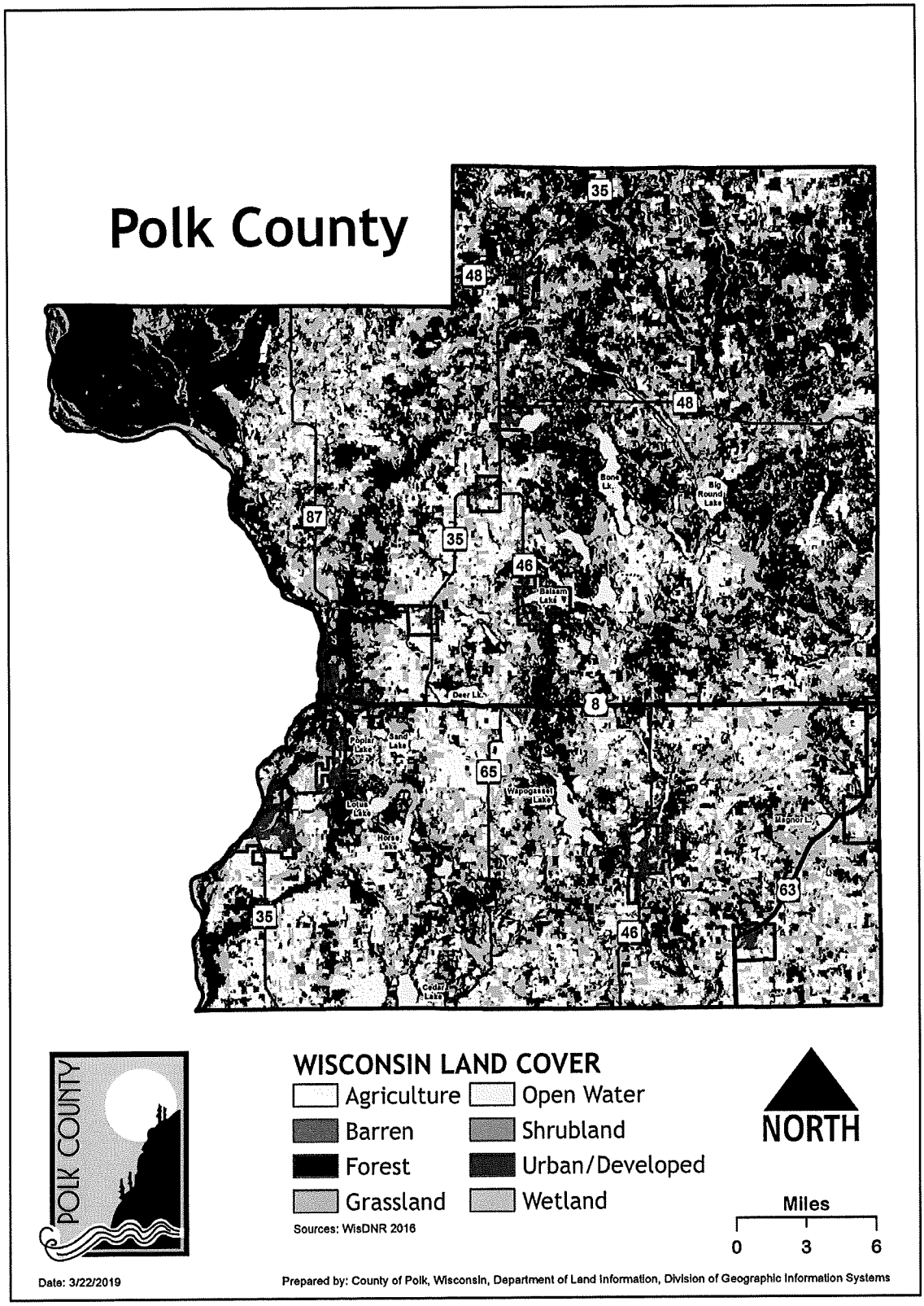
Polk County has a total area of 619,520 acres (including almost 23,000 acres of lakes and streams). While agriculture predominates the county's landscape, forest lands are the second most extensive land cover in the county, see Map 3, on the next page. Assessed private forest acreage increased by roughly 9000 acres, or just over 14 square miles, between 2007 and 2018. In 2018, the combined assessed acres in forestland amounted to 163,206 acres or thirty-two percent of the total assessed acreage for the county.

The above assessed forest acreage does not include the public natural resource lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Polk County, or a town. In 2018, the largest concentration of public lands is located in the Town of Sterling with 20,774 acres, the Town of Lorain had 6,451 acres, the Town of Mckinley with 5,640 acres the Town of Johnstown with 4,416 acres and lastly the Town of Bone Lake with 4,341. The Town of West Sweden has the least amount of Public Land with 250 acres.

The forests of Polk County are predominantly of the Northern Forest type of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. Northwest Polk County also has unique oak and Pine Barrens found on out washed sands. The forests of the county have a high potential for a multitude of forest-based recreation activities. The addition of more organized recreational developments on the county's public lands is also possible if desired or needed in the future.

A variety of wildlife can be found throughout Polk County. Species include black bear, whitetail deer, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, beaver, fox, ruffed grouse, pheasant, muskrat, snowshoe hare, and to a lesser extent, mink and otter. In addition, the county's 22,626 acres of lakes and 200 miles of rivers and streams hold variety of game fish, such as Muskie, northern, walleye, bass, catfish, and pan fish. There are approximately 90 miles of trout streams in the county with varied size and bag limits, so as not to jeopardize the existence of the resource.

Map 3. Land Cover Polk County.



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

According to the Wisconsin Department of Administration, (WISDOA), the 2018 estimated population of Polk County is 44,380. This is a 175 person increase, from 2010 (see Table 1). Population growth has slowed dramatically compared to the 1990's and 2000's. During the 1990s, Polk County was the eighth fastest growing county in the State of Wisconsin based on percentage of population change. Polk County is projected to increase in population by 3475 people from 2010 to 2020. Births will exceed deaths by 607 people and net migration into the county is projected to be 2868 people. In addition, Polk County's population will continue to increase through 2040.

TABLE 1.
HISTORIC POPULATION • 1900 TO 2018
Polk County

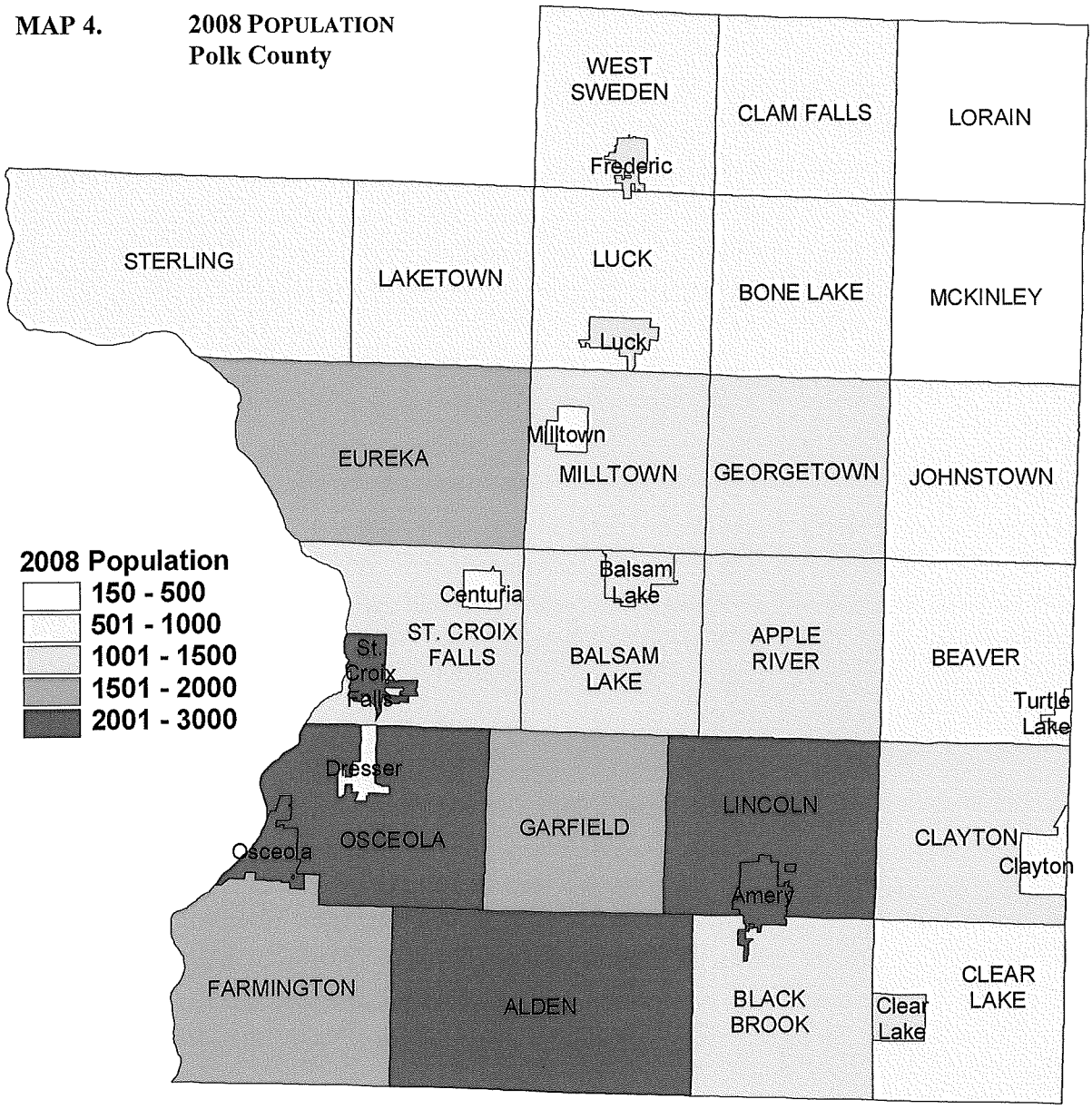
Year	Population	Numerical Change	Percent Change
1900	17,801	--	--
1910	21,367	3,566	20.0
1920	26,870	5,503	25.8
1930	26,567	-303	-1.1
1940	26,197	-370	-1.4
1950	24,944	-1,253	-4.8
1960	24,968	24	0.1
1970	26,666	1,698	6.8
1980	32,351	5,685	21.3
1990	34,773	2,422	7.5
2000	41,319	6,546	18.8
2010	44,205	2,886	7.0
2014	43,978	-227	-1.0
*2018	44,380	402	1.0
*est 2025	50,760	6380	14.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, WisDOA 2018 Estimate

**Estimates from WISDOA*

Map 4 on the following page shows the distribution of population within Polk County in 2008. The population is most concentrated in those towns and communities in the southwestern portion of the county closest to the St. Croix River and Minneapolis/St. Paul.

MAP 4. **2008 POPULATION**
Polk County



When compared to Wisconsin as a whole, Polk County is similar in demographics. One notable divergence is that 95.1% of its population is white (non-Hispanic), compared to a state average of 81.3%. The Black and Hispanic population has grown over the last seven years. The county is also quite rural, with 48.3 persons per square mile in 2017, less than half the state average number of persons per square mile of 106.

For the first time, in the 1960s, the percentage urban residents surpassed the percentage rural farm residents (see Table 2 on the next page), with rural non-farm residents surpassing rural farm residents about 1970. The number of rural farm residents continued to decrease, constituting only 5.6 percent of the county's population in 2000, a decrease from 43.3 percent in 1960. Since 1960, the urban population has overall remained quite stable as a proportion of the overall population, while the percentage of the total, non-farming population choosing rural living has increased tremendously.

Figure 1: Demographics by Ethnicity as a percent of the Total Population 2017.

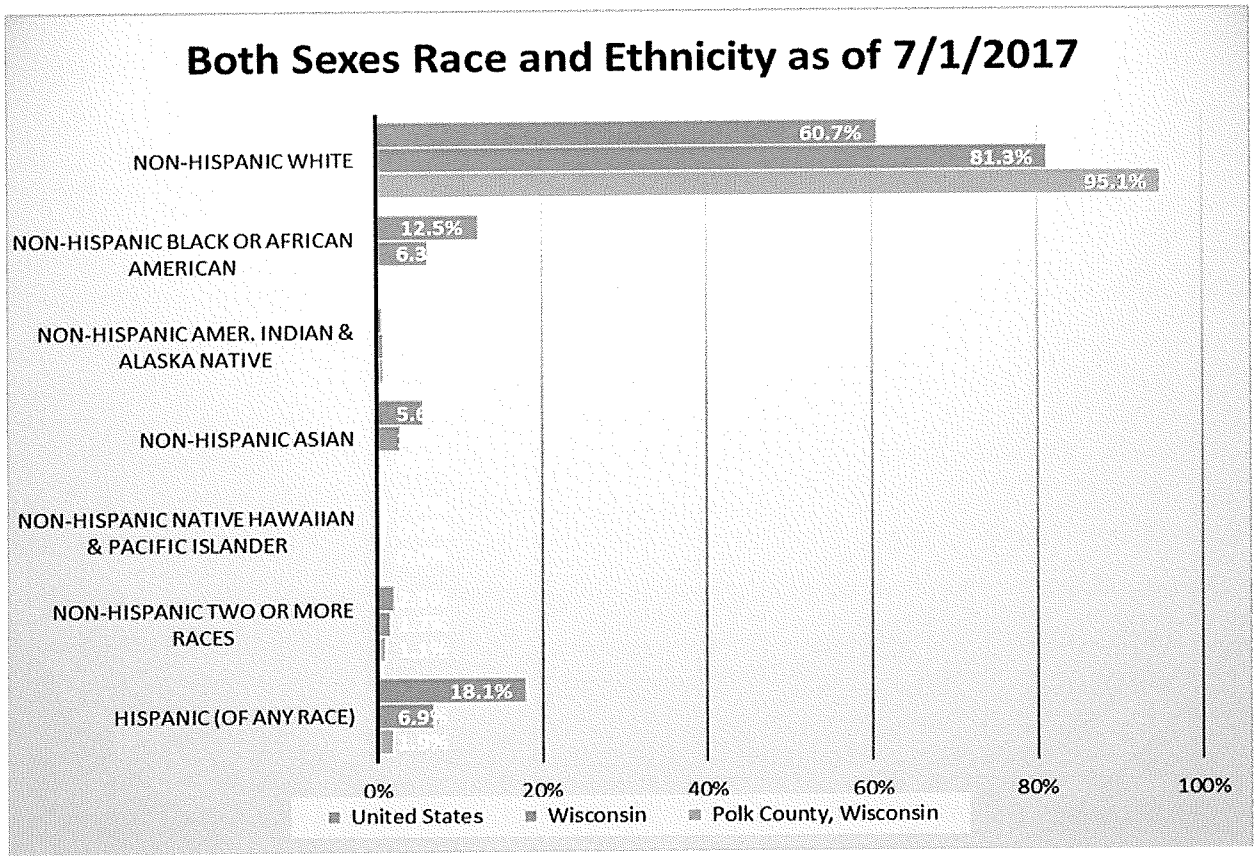


TABLE 2. Population Distribution by Incorporated and Unincorporated Communities • 1950 to 2010

Polk County

Area	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Incorporated	8,085	8,916	9,933	11,704	12,888	14,829	15,269
Unincorporated	16,859	16,052	16,733	20,647	21,885	26,490	28,843
% Incorporated	32.4	35.7	37.2	36.2	37.1	35.9	34.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, WisDOA Demographic Services 20

Table 3: below compares the age and sex distribution of Polk County in 2000 and 2014. Population increased in the older age groups (55-64) to (85+) in addition to the (20-24) and (30-34) age group. All other age groups decreased. In 2000, the median age of Polk County residents was 38.7 years, an increase from 31.4 years from 1980. The national trend of an aging population is reflected in Polk County. Large numbers of people will be achieving retirement age over the next 5-10 years and may impact the type of recreational amenities offered.

TABLE 3.
AGE DISTRIBUTION • 2014
Polk County

Age Group	Males	Females	Total	% Change from 2010
0-14	4,152	3,953	8,105	-4%
15-19	1,425	1,331	2,756	-7%
20-24	1,137	1,103	2240	18%
25-29	975	984	1959	-14%
30-34	1,229	1,226	2,455	1%
35-39	1,267	1,227	2,494	-3%
40-44	1,326	1,360	2,686	-11%
45-54	3,385	3,343	6,728	-8%
55-64	3,494	3,313	6,807	10%
65-74	2,181	2,195	4,376	14%
75-84	1,117	1,249	2,366	7%
85+	355	651	1,006	1%
Total	22,043	21,935	44,205	-1%

SOURCE: OFFICE OF HEALTH INFORMATICS, DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH, WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WisDOA) population projections are, by state statute, the official population projections for Wisconsin. As shown in Table 4 on the following page, WisDOA projections predict a 30.3 percent increase in the Polk County population (about 12,506 more residents) between 2000 and 2040. The percentage increases within the towns are anticipated to be a bit higher on average than the villages and cities. The largest rates of increase are expected in the Towns of Beaver, Eureka, Farmington, Garfield, and Osceola, and the Village of Dresser.

TABLE 4. POLK COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY MINOR CIVIL DIVISION • 2000 TO 2040

Municipality	2000 Census	2010 Census	7/1/2017	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	Change 2000-2040	% Change 2000-2040
T Alden	2,615	2,786	2,783	2,815	3,035	3,250	3,420	3,495	3,475	860	32.9%
T Apple River	1,067	1,146	1,160	1,160	1,260	1,350	1,430	1,470	1,470	403	37.8%
T Balsam Lake	1,384	1,411	1,387	1,405	1,505	1,590	1,660	1,680	1,660	276	19.9%
T Beaver	753	835	840	845	930	1,015	1,085	1,125	1,140	387	51.4%
T Black Brook	1,208	1,325	1,333	1,350	1,470	1,590	1,685	1,740	1,745	537	44.5%
T Bone Lake	710	717	720	725	785	840	885	910	905	195	27.5%
T Clam Falls	547	596	608	600	635	675	700	710	700	153	28.0%
T Clayton	912	975	982	990	1,070	1,145	1,210	1,240	1,235	323	35.4%
T Clear Lake	800	899	890	910	990	1,060	1,125	1,155	1,155	355	44.4%
T Eureka	1,338	1,649	1,668	1,675	1,840	2,000	2,140	2,220	2,240	902	67.4%
T Farmington	1,625	1,836	1,847	1,865	2,030	2,195	2,335	2,410	2,425	800	49.2%
T Garfield	1,443	1,692	1,690	1,715	1,880	2,035	2,175	2,250	2,270	827	57.3%
T Georgetown	1,004	977	991	985	1,050	1,110	1,155	1,170	1,155	151	15.0%
T Johnstown	520	534	525	535	570	605	630	640	635	115	22.1%
T Laketown	918	961	976	965	1,030	1,085	1,130	1,140	1,120	202	22.0%
T Lincoln	2,304	2,208	2,197	2,170	2,270	2,355	2,410	2,395	2,325	21	0.9%
T Lorain	328	284	278	275	280	285	285	280	265	- 63	-19.2%
T Luck	881	930	918	915	960	1,005	1,030	1,030	1,005	124	14.1%
T McKinley	328	347	352	350	375	395	415	420	415	87	26.5%
T Milltown	1,146	1,226	1,223	1,235	1,325	1,415	1,490	1,520	1,510	364	31.8%
T Osceola	2,085	2,855	2,867	2,915	3,235	3,545	3,825	3,995	4,055	1,970	94.5%
T St. Croix Falls	1,119	1,165	1,153	1,170	1,245	1,315	1,370	1,385	1,370	251	22.4%
T Sterling	724	790	772	780	835	885	925	940	930	206	28.5%
T West Sweden	731	699	693	685	715	740	750	740	715	- 16	-2.2%
V Balsam Lake	950	1,009	1,012	1,005	1,070	1,135	1,185	1,200	1,185	235	24.7%
V Centuria	865	948	945	930	985	1,035	1,070	1,075	1,055	190	22.0%
V Clayton	507	571	565	575	625	670	710	730	730	223	44.0%
V Clear Lake	1,051	1,070	1,086	1,065	1,130	1,185	1,225	1,235	1,210	159	15.1%
V Dresser	732	895	897	910	1,000	1,085	1,160	1,205	1,215	483	66.0%
V Frederic	1,262	1,137	1,127	1,115	1,155	1,180	1,190	1,165	1,110	- 152	-12.0%
V Luck	1,210	1,119	1,085	1,070	1,100	1,115	1,120	1,085	1,030	- 180	-14.9%
V Milltown	888	917	910	915	975	1,030	1,070	1,085	1,070	182	20.5%
V Osceola	2,421	2,568	2,607	2,615	2,820	3,020	3,185	3,255	3,245	824	34.0%
V Turtle Lake	65	93	93	90	95	95	95	90	85	20	30.8%
C Amery	2,845	2,902	2,903	2,930	3,120	3,295	3,425	3,460	3,410	565	19.9%
C St. Croix Falls	2,033	2,133	2,087	2,135	2,285	2,430	2,540	2,585	2,560	527	25.9%
Totals	**41,319**	**44,205**	**44,213**	**44,390**	**47,680**	**50,760**	**53,240**	**54,230**	**53,825**	**12,506**	**30.3%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 & Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, 2017.
2017 Projections are for Research and Analysis Only.
***Portion of Turtle Lake located in Polk County only.**

Limited information is available on people with physical disabilities in Polk County. In 2000, census data was collected on non-institutionalized persons, ages five years old and older, having self-care or mobility limitations, or other disability. In 2010, 4,999 Polk County non-institutionalized residents were classified as having a disability, many with multiple disabilities. The following distribution of disability types was reported for civilian, non-institutionalized residents ages five and older:

sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness, deafness):	5.9% of the population
physical disabilities (e.g., impaired walking or lifting):	5.6%
mental disabilities (e.g., impaired learning):	3.9%
self-care disabilities (e.g., difficulty dressing or bathing):	2.3%

Although there is no information on the type and severity of these limitations, and there is no consistent historical data to provide a trend, this information does provide an indication that there are several people with limitations who should be considered during the development or improvement of park facilities.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Polk County is predominantly rural in nature, with agriculture as the primary land use. In 2017, there were 1234 farms, the number of farms continues to decrease. The average farm size decreased from 215 acres in 1987 to 208 acres in 2017. Along those lines, the median farm size in 2002 was 120 acres and in 2017 that figure dropped to 83 acres. The amount of acreage in farmland in Polk County has fluctuated around the 50% mark of total acreage in the county, until the last ten years were the farm acreage is closer to the 40% mark of the total acreage of the county as reflected in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5.
ACRES IN FARMLAND • 1987 TO 2018
Polk County

	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012	2018
Acres	315,416	282,639	301,736	292,860	288,994	255,917	256,114
Percent of County Land Area	51.6%	46.2%	49.3%	47.9%	47.2%	41.8%	41.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Shown in Table 6 is the employment by industry in Polk County from 2012 to 2017. Manufacturing is the largest employer gaining 502 jobs from 2012 to 2017. Polk County has gained manufacturing jobs since the recession of 2007 began.

TABLE 6.
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY • 2012 TO 2017
Polk County Residents

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Manufacturing	3,376	3,878	502	15%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,517	2,712	195	8%
Government	2,734	2,694	-40	-1%
Retail Trade	1,904	1,952	48	3%
Administrative Support ,Remedial Services	964	1,262	298	31%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,073	1,221	148	14%
Construction	896	912	16	2%
Other Services	625	663	38	6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	554	580	26	5%
Professional and Technical Services	515	493	-22	-4%
Wholesale Trade	434	353	-81	-19%
Finance and Insurance	406	345	-61	-15%
Transportation and Warehouse	278	283	5	2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	231	261	30	13%
Information	194	175	-19	-19%
Utilities	107	96	-11	-11%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	92	94	2	2%
Education	43	58	15	35%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	31	46	15	48%
All Industries	18,986	20,095	1109	6%

Source: Emsi Q3 2018 Data Set. www.economicmodeling.com West Central Planning

LAND USE TRENDS

Polk County is located northeast of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and is contiguous to the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Census Bureau defines a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as a county or counties with a central city of at least 50,000 people, a total population over 100,000 people, and significant social and economic ties which exist between the central city and any outlying counties that are included. Based on that definition, St. Croix County became part of the Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA in 1980 and Pierce County in 1990. Consequently, even though Polk County is not currently a part of the MSA, it is apparent that the influence of the metro area is spreading, and that Polk County is becoming more economically and socially interconnected to the MSA.

In 2014, the assessed residential acreage in the unincorporated areas of the county was 43,461, or 94.6 percent of the total assessed residential acreage in the county. This is down from 98.5 percent in 1987. However, the assessed residential acreage increase in unincorporated areas from 1987 to 2014 was 24,311 acres or a 127 percent increase. That is a 5.3 percent annual increase.

The Towns of Alden, Farmington, Eureka, Osceola, Milltown, Lincoln, and St. Croix Falls had significant residential acreage (4,541, 3,063, 2,977, 2,808, 2,719, 2,650 and 2,386, respectively) in 2014. All these towns are generally in the western part of the county in proximity to Minnesota or St. Croix County and State Highways 35, 65 and 87, and account for nearly 46 percent of the assessed residential acreage in the county. From 1987 to 2014 the Town of Alden (3,202) had the greatest absolute increase in assessed residential acres, followed by the Towns of Farmington (2,229), Eureka (1,883), and Milltown (1,774). Regarding assessed residential acreage percentage increases between 1987 and 2014, the Town of Clear Lake (410 percent) had the greatest increase, followed by the Towns of Lorain (379 percent), Farmington (267 percent), and Alden (239 percent). These communities have grown in residential acreage at an average rate of close to 10 percent per year since 1987. Ten other towns that have at least doubled their residential acreage between 1987 and 2014, as seen in Table 7.

The cities and villages in Polk County also saw dramatic growth in residential land. Since many communities had reporting discrepancies during the period and the assessment data are inconclusive for 1987, comparisons between 1998 and 2007 follow for incorporated areas. While the Village of Frederic saw a sevenfold increase in assessed residential acreage between 1998 and 2007, the Villages of Osceola (269 percent) and Balsam Lake (251 percent) at least tripled theirs and the Villages of Luck (159 percent), Dresser (126 percent) and Milltown (107 percent) at least doubled theirs. The other cities and villages experienced significant increases in residential land. This growth is expected to continue, noting that a substantial percentage of the county's housing units are seasonal or recreational use. Further, this development will continue to put pressure on the shores of lakes, rivers and streams, and their associated floodplains.

Though residential development has been increasing dramatically, agricultural uses in 2014 still constituted approximately 45 percent of all assessed acreage in the unincorporated areas of the county. Nineteen of Polk County's twenty-four towns have more than a third of their assessed land assessed as agriculture and agricultural forest. Nine towns have at least half of their

assessed land assessed as agriculture and agricultural forest. Agriculture is a significant activity in Polk County. However, assessed agricultural land decreased by 26.2 percent between 1997 and 2014. Those towns that have lower agricultural acreage generally have at least one of the following factors present; higher non-farm acres, higher forested acres, significant surface water acres, or other significant natural resource lands

As discussed previously, forest lands was the next predominant land use in Polk County and has been slowly increasing. Larger areas of forest, grasslands, and barrens are found in the Town Sterling to the northwest and the east-northeast portion of the county. Undeveloped lands often associated with very large lot or estate residential development, increased by 96.2 percent between 1997 and 2007, and totaled 14.6 percent of the assessed lands in the county in 2007. As expected, large amounts of commercial and industrial land occur in the villages and cities. Incorporated communities also generally have a greater percentage and concentration of residential uses.

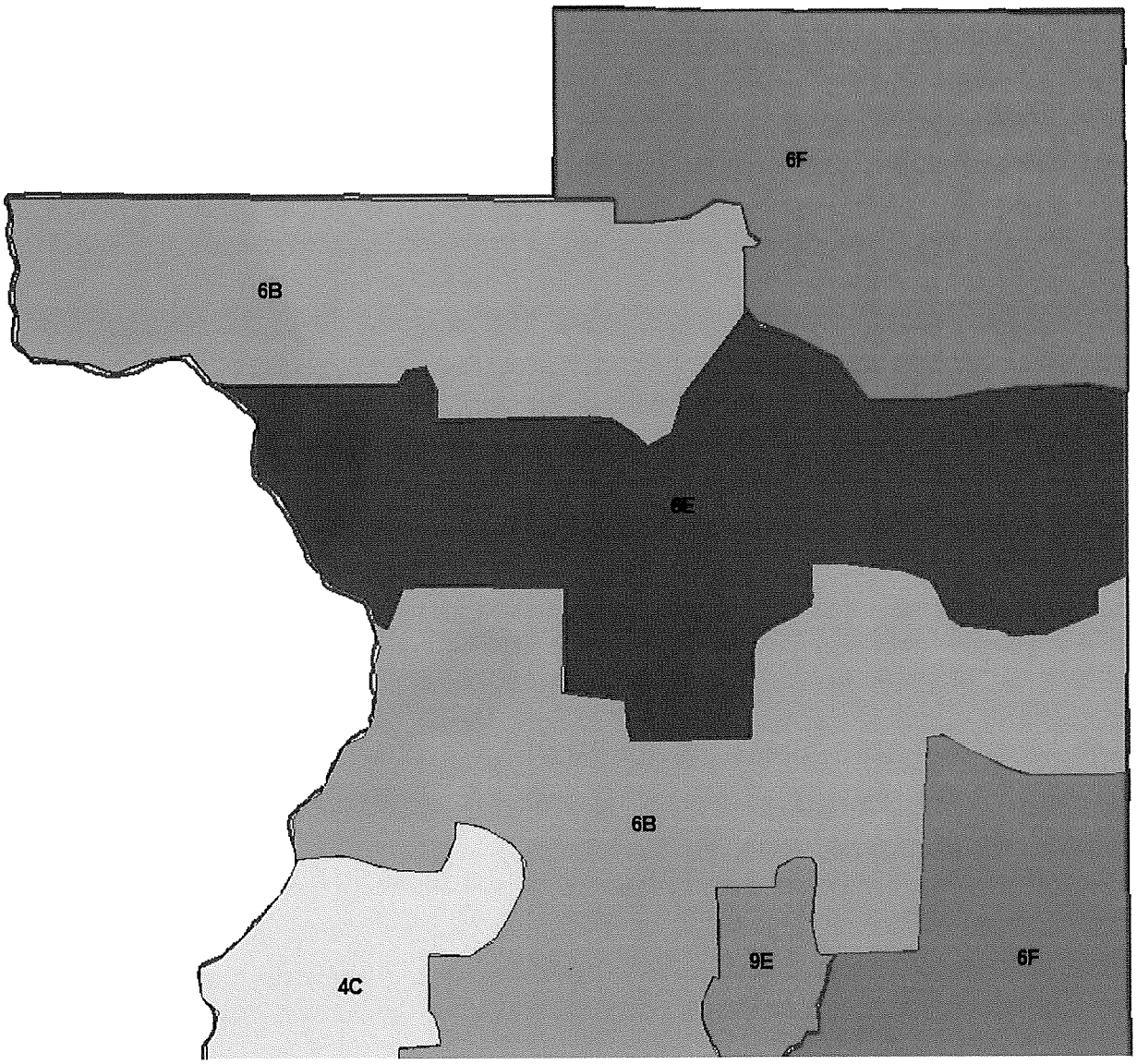
More information concerning Land use trends can be found in the Polk County Comprehensive Plan 2009-2029. https://www.co.polk.wi.us/plans.

TABLE 7.
RESIDENTIAL ACREAGE CHANGE

Municipality	Total Acres 1987	Total Acres 1998	Total Acres 2014	87-14 Percent Change	98-14 Percent Change	Total Change '87-'14
T Alden	1,339	3,025	4,541	239.1%	50.1%	3,202
T Apple River	1,212	1,409	2,102	73.4%	49.2%	890
T Balsam Lake	883	1,195	1,985	124.8%	66.1%	1,102
T Beaver	567	1,094	1,093	92.8%	-0.1%	526
T Black Brook	637	1,345	1,796	181.9%	33.5%	1,159
T Bone Lake	560	856	958	71.1%	11.9%	398
T Clam Falls	349	393	770	120.6%	95.9%	421
T Clayton	560	897	1,283	129.1%	43.0%	723
T Clear Lake	231	806	1,178	410.0%	46.2%	947
T Eureka	1,095	1,191	2,978	172.0%	150.0%	1,883
T Farmington	835	1,888	3,064	266.9%	62.3%	2,229
T Garfield	611	1,414	1,708	179.5%	20.8%	1,097
T Georgetown	984	1,345	1,809	83.8%	34.5%	825
T Johnstown	593	789	995	67.8%	26.1%	402
T Laketown	537	1,182	1,405	161.6%	18.9%	868
T Lincoln	1,168	1,536	2,650	126.9%	72.5%	1,482
T Lorain	155	708	743	379.4%	4.9%	588
T Luck	616	699	1,592	158.4%	127.8%	976
T McKinley	406	490	650	60.1%	32.7%	244
T Milltown	945	2,070	2,719	187.7%	31.4%	1,774
T Osceola	1,567	2,678	2,809	79.3%	4.9%	1,242
T Saint Croix Falls	1,218	1,998	1,405	15.4%	-29.7%	187
T Sterling	1,419	2,272	2,386	68.1%	5.0%	967
T West Sweden	643	749	841	30.8%	12.3%	198
V Balsam Lake	38	113	389	924.3%	244.4%	351
V Centuria	72	109	237	229.6%	117.7%	165
V Clayton	20	44	59	192.5%	33.0%	39
V Clear Lake	NA	125	166	NA	33.1%	--
V Dresser	NA	19	56	NA	192.9%	--
V Frederic	NA	16	349	NA	2083.0%	--
V Luck	23	61	336	1359.9%	450.5%	313
V Milltown	25	60	140	459.8%	133.3%	115
V Osceola	20	72	258	1189.7%	258.3%	238
V Turtle Lake	0	0	3	NA	NA	--
C Amery	NA	NA	166	NA	NA	--
C St. Croix Falls	91	188	282	209.7%	49.9%	191
COUNTY TOTAL	**19,419**	**32,836**	**46,589**	**139.9**	**29.5**	**27,170**

Source: WI Dept of Revenue and Polk County Assessment Records

MAP 5. LIFE GROUPS- POLK COUNTY. ESRI DOMINANT LIFE GROUPS



LEGEND
6B SALT OF THE EARTH
6E RURAL RESORT DWELLERS /COZY COUNTRY LIVING
6F HEARTLAND COMMUNITIES/ COZY COUNTRY LIVING
9E RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES SENIOR STYLES
4C Middleburg Family Landscapes

6B Salt of the Earth

Salt of the Earth residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time and tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; they spend most of their free time preparing for their next fishing, boating, or camping trip. The majority has at least a high school diploma or some college education; many have expanded their skill set during their years of employment in the manufacturing and related industries. They may be experts with DIY projects, but the latest technology is not their forte. They use it when absolutely necessary but seek face-to-face contact in their routine activities.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Steady employment in construction, manufacturing, and related service industries.
- Completed education: 40% with a high school diploma only.
- Household income just over the national median, while net worth is nearly double the national median.
- Spending time with family is their top priority.
- Cost-conscious consumers, loyal to brands they like, with a focus on buying American.
- Last to buy the latest and greatest products.
- Try to eat healthy, tracking the nutrition and ingredients in the food they purchase

MARKET PROFILE (Consumer preferences)

• Outdoor sports and activities, such as fishing, boating, hunting, and overnight camping trips are popular.

• To support their pastimes, truck ownership is high; many also own an ATV.

• They own the equipment to maintain their lawns and tend to their vegetable gardens.

• Residents often tackle home remodeling and improvement jobs themselves.

• Due to their locale, they own satellite dishes, and have access to high speed internet connections like DSL.

• These conservative consumers prefer to conduct their business in person rather than online. They use an agent to purchase insurance.

6E Rural Resort Dwellers / Cozy Country Living.

Although the Great Recession forced many owners of second homes to sell, Rural Resort Dwellers residents remain an active market, just a bit smaller. These communities are centered in resort areas, many in the Midwest, where the change in seasons supports a variety of outdoor activities. Retirement looms for many of these blue collar, older householders, but workers are postponing retirement or returning to work to maintain their current lifestyles. Workers are traveling further to maintain employment. They are passionate about their hobbies, like freshwater fishing and hunting, but otherwise have very simple tastes

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

• Rural Resort Dwellers residents are close to retirement. They've accumulated wealth and begun to shift their portfolios to low-risk assets. These active residents continue to work in skilled occupations.

• Simple tastes and modesty characterize these blue-collar residents. They shop for timeless, comfortable clothing, but only when something must be replaced. They pay little attention to advertising and usually stick to the brands they know.

• They spend time with their spouses and maintain a social calendar.

MARKET PROFILE (Consumer preferences)

• Residents drive older domestic vehicles and prefer to spend their disposable income on gear to support their hobbies, which include freshwater fishing, hunting with a rifle or shotgun, and motorcycling.

• At home, *Rural Resort Dwellers* residents spend any free time working on their vehicles and maintaining their gear. They make frequent trips to their local hardware store for parts and tools. These hands-on consumers are also passionate about vegetable gardening.

• Due to their remote locations, these neighborhoods have satellite dishes. A few residents still rely on dial-up modems to stay connected. They don't access the Internet often but will make online purchases for items difficult to find in nearby stores.

• Their taste in TV shows reflects their hobbies—National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and the Weather Channel.

6F HEARTLAND COMMUNITIES/ COZY COUNTRY LIVING

Well settled and close-knit, Heartland Communities are semirural and semiretired. These older householders are primarily homeowners, and many have paid off their mortgages. Their children have moved away, but they have no plans to leave their homes. Their hearts are with the country; they embrace the slower pace of life here but actively participate in outdoor activities and community events. Traditional and patriotic, these residents support their local businesses, always buy American, and favor domestic driving vacations over foreign plane trips.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

• Retirees in this market depress the average labor force participation rate to less than 60% (Index 94), but the unemployment rate is comparable to the US.

• More workers are white collar than blue collar; more skilled than unskilled.

• The rural economy of this market provides employment in the manufacturing, construction, utilities, healthcare, and agriculture industries.

• These are budget savvy consumers; they stick to brands they grew up with and know the price of goods they purchase. Buying American is important.

• Daily life is busy, but routine. Working on the weekends is not uncommon.

• Residents trust TV and newspapers more than any other media.

• Skeptical about their financial future, they stick to community banks and low-risk investments.

MARKET PROFILE

• Traditional in their ways, residents of *Heartland Communities* choose to bank and pay their bills in person and purchase insurance from an agent.

• Most have high-speed Internet access at home or on their cell phone but aren't ready to go paperless.

• Many residents have paid off their home mortgages but still hold auto loans and student loans. Interest checking accounts are common.

• To support their local community, residents participate in public activities.

• Home remodeling is not a priority, but homeowners do tackle necessary maintenance work on their cherished homes. They have invested in riding lawn mowers to maintain their larger yards.

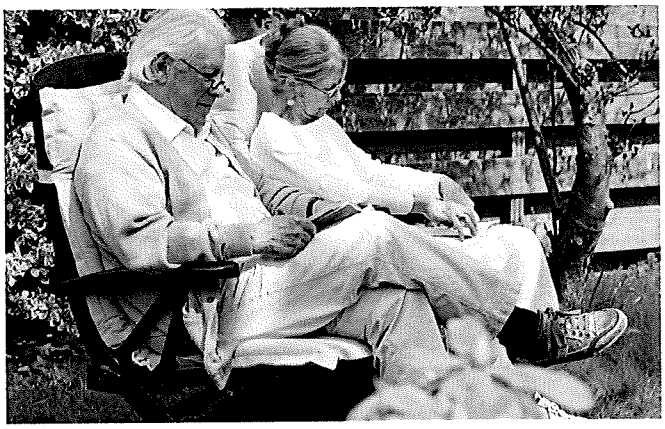
• They enjoy country music and watch CMT.

• Motorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise.

• To get around these semirural communities, residents prefer domestic trucks or SUVs.

9E Retirement Communities Senior Styles

Retirement Communities neighborhoods are evenly distributed across the country. They combine single-family homes and independent living with apartments, assisted living, and continuous care nursing facilities. Over half of the housing units are in multiunit structures, and many residents have a lease. This group enjoys watching cable TV and stays up-to-date with newspapers and magazines. Residents take pride in fiscal responsibility and keep a close eye on their finances. Although income and net worth are well below national averages, residents enjoy going to the movies, fishing, and taking vacations. While some residents enjoy cooking, many have paid their dues in the kitchen and would rather dine out.



SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

• Brand loyal, this segment will spend a little more for their favorite brands, but most likely they will have a coupon.

• Frugal, they pay close attention to finances.

• They prefer reading magazines over interacting with computers.

• They are health conscious and prefer name brand drugs.

MARKET PROFILE (Consumer preferences)

• Enjoy hard-cover books, book clubs, crossword puzzles, and Sudoku.

• Contribute to political organizations and other groups.

• Entertainment preferences: playing cards and reading books.

• Prefer watching cable TV, including premium channels like HBO and Cinemax.

• Like to travel—including visits to foreign countries.

• Shop at diverse, large retail chains like Sears, Family Dollar, Target, and Walmart for convenience.

4C Middleburg Family Landscapes

Middleburg neighborhoods transformed from the easy pace of country living to semirural subdivisions in the last decade, when the housing boom reached out. Residents are conservative, family-oriented consumers. Still more country than rock and roll, they are thrifty but willing to carry some debt and are already investing in their futures. They rely on their smartphones and mobile devices to stay in touch and pride themselves on their expertise. They prefer to buy American and travel in the US. This market is younger, growing, and have ample disposable income.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Education: 65% with a high school diploma or some college.
- Unemployment rate lower at 4.7%.
- Labor force participation typical of a younger population at 66.7%.
- Traditional values are the norm here— faith, country, and family.
- Prefer to buy American and for a good price.
- Comfortable with the latest in technology, for convenience (online banking or saving money on landlines) and entertainment.

MARKET PROFILE (Consumer preferences)

- Residents are partial to domestic vehicles; they like to drive trucks, SUVs, or motorcycles.
- Entertainment is primarily family-oriented, TV and movie rentals or theme parks and family restaurants.
- Spending priorities also focus on family (children's toys and apparel) or home DIY projects.
- Sports include hunting, fishing, bowling, and baseball.
- TV and magazines provide entertainment and information.
- Media preferences include country and Christian channels.

IX.
OUTDOOR RECREATION SUPPLY INVENTORY

This section provides a brief inventory of the different land- and water-based recreational activities in Polk County, as well as related recommendations for each activity based on the previous needs assessment and program goals.

Implementation of plan recommendations will be contingent upon county priorities, feasibility, and available resources and opportunities (e.g., grants, partnerships, available land, and staff resources).

Since local municipalities are not included in the scope of this plan, the recreational facilities owned by towns, villages, and cities are generally not included in this section.

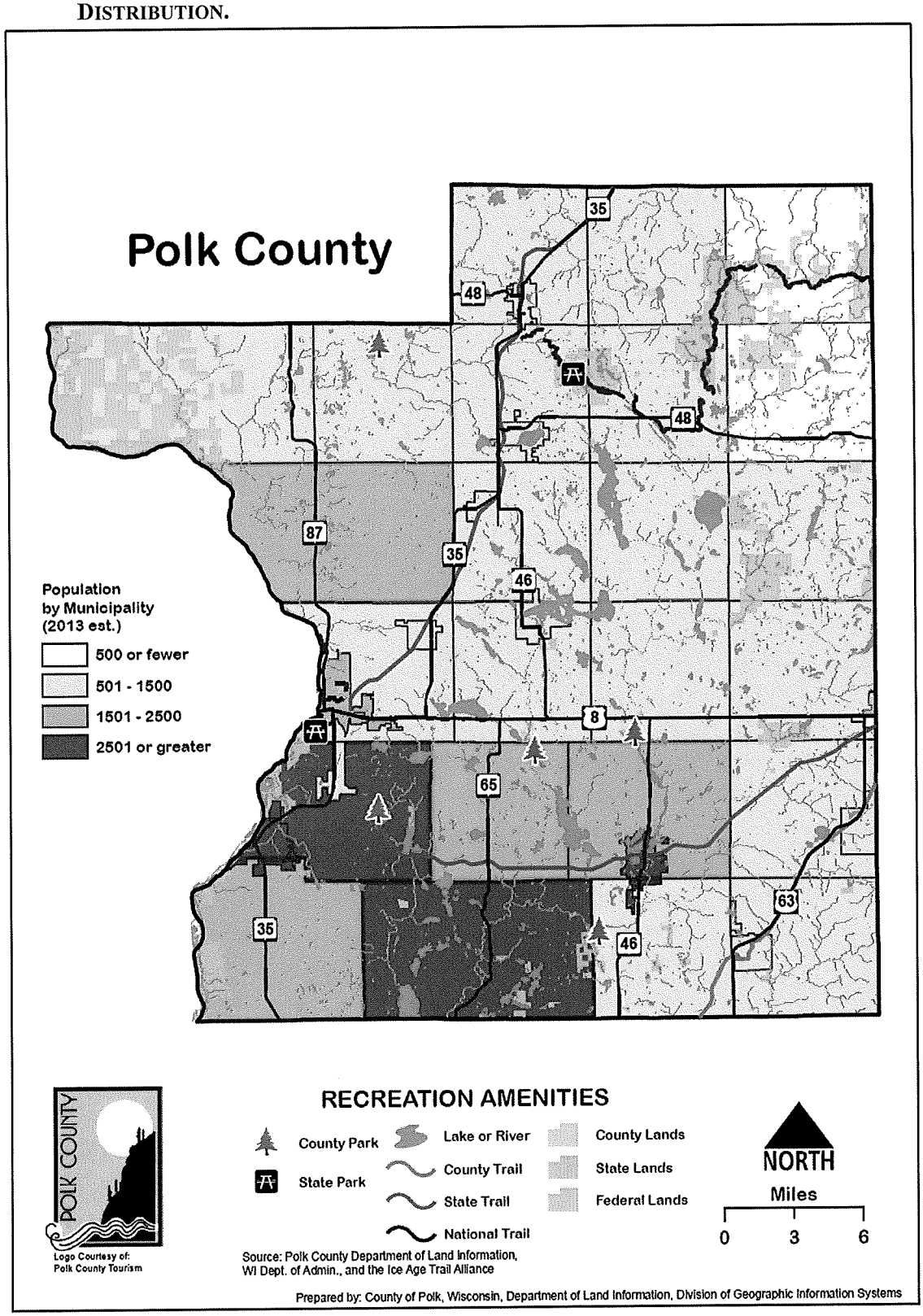
Map 6 on the next page shows the locations of the county and state parks in Polk County, as well as the State trails in relation to the population density. This map will be frequently referred to in the remainder of this report.

The Recreational Viewer is located on the Polk County website (https://www.co.polk.wi.us/recreationviewer/) and provides information on all recreational opportunities in Polk County.

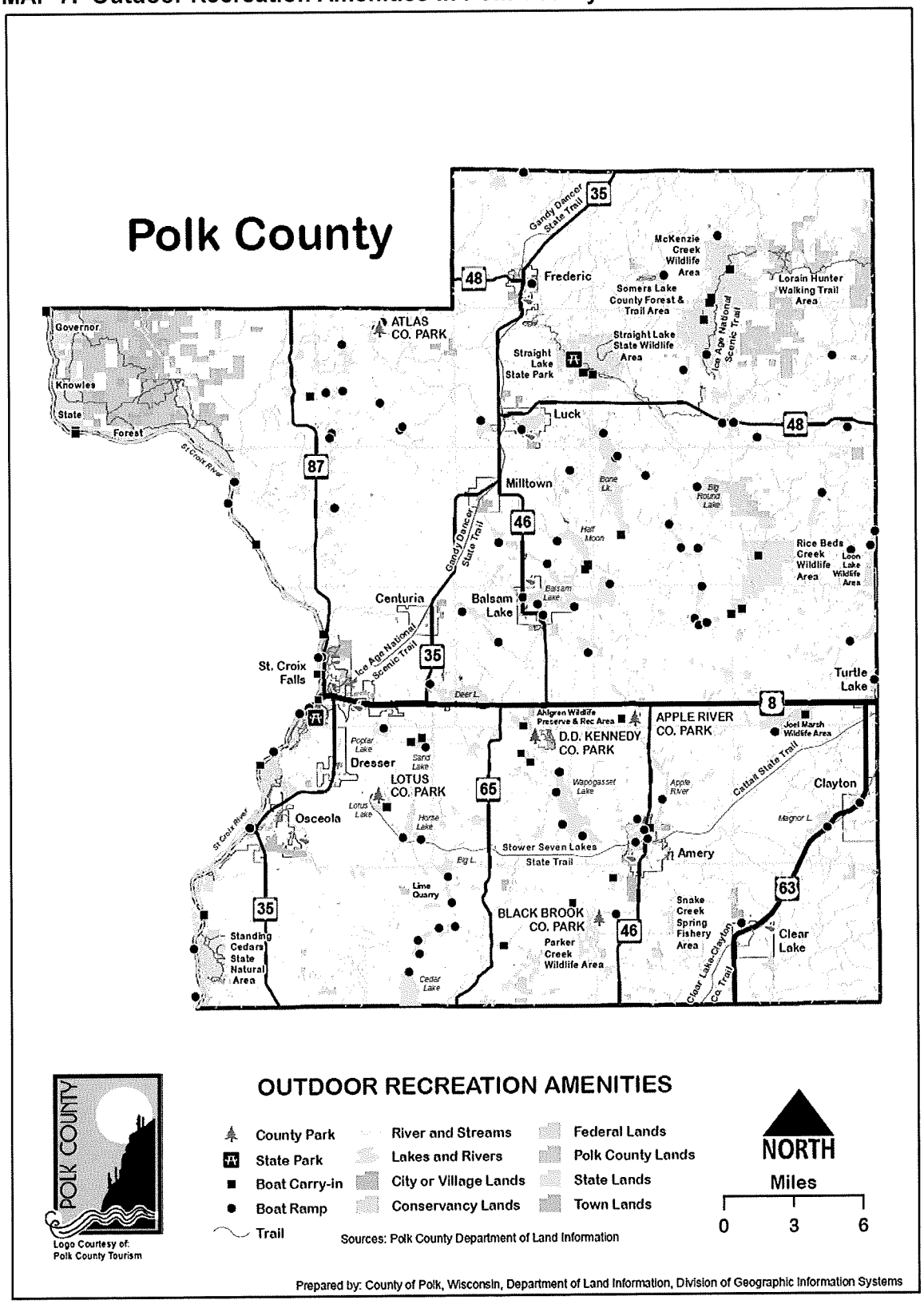
AVAILABILITY OF COUNTY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Map 7 on page 45 provides a general reference to the availability of, recreation lands and trails. Six of the county's nine recreational facilities are in the southern half of the county which generally has a higher number of residents per community and has been experiencing more growth. However, the map also shows a general lack of the trail system connecting the communities of southwestern Polk County. As expected, the public and private forest lands are more concentrated in the more sparsely populated areas.

MAP 6. POPULATION BY MUNICIPALITY POPULATION & OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL AMENITIES DISTRIBUTION.



MAP 7. Outdoor Recreation Amenities in Polk County



WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

Water Resources

Polk County has extensive and high-quality surface water resources (see Map 2 page 23). They provide abundant water-related recreation opportunities for the local citizens as well as for numerous non-resident visitors. The county has over 473 lakes and 200 miles of streams. The total surface water area of the county is 23,619.8 acres. The lake surface represents 21,893.7 acres, while 1,726.1 acres are in stream surface.

Of the 473 lakes, there are 232 named lakes and 241 unnamed lakes. Of the 232 named lakes, there are 91 with public access, though not all have a boat ramp (see Table 9). Table 9 on the following page lists the Polk County lakes of 100 acres or greater. There are 89.9 miles of trout streams. Of these, 26.4 miles are Class I (see Table 10 on page 48).

TABLE 8. POLK COUNTY LAKE SUPPLY

	Number	% With Public Access	Total Acres	% Acres w/ Public Access
Named Inland Lakes	232	39	22,303	82%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Wisconsin Lakes, 20015.

Water-Based Activities Recommendations

Ample surface water acreage exists for both boating and waterskiing in the county. The Polk County Parks Department manages eight Boat landings on the following lakes: Staples, Mirror, Little Butternut, Magnor, Atlas, Black Brook, Lotus and Makie. Lake.

TABLE 9. LAKES OF 100 ACRES OR MORE
Polk County

Lake	Acreage	Maximum Depth	Public Access
Antler (Pine)	101	22	X
Apple River Flowage	639	18	X
Balsam	2,054	37	X
Bass (T36N, R5W, S31)	138	19	-
Bear	160	n.a.	-
Bear Trap	241	25	X
Big	259	24	X
Big Butternut	378	19	X
Big Round	1,015	17	X
Blake	217	14	X
Blom (Bloom)	208	13	-
Bone (T35N, R16W, S06)	1,781	43	X
Cedar	1,107	28	X
Church Pine	107	45	X
Clam Falls Flowage	137	14	X
Deer (T34N, R17W, S29)	807	46	X
Diamond	126	15	X
Elbow	233	8	-
Freedom No. 2	106	4	-
Garfield (Big Horseshoe)	120	8	-
Glenton (Rice S20, T35, R17)	128	10	X
Half Moon	579	60	X
Horse	228	11	X
Horseshoe (T34N, R14W, S06)	377	57	
Indianhead Flowage	776	57	X
Largon	129	10	X
Little Butternut	189	23	X
Long (T34N, R17W, S06)	272	17	X
Long Trade	153	13	X
Lotus (T33N, R18W, S21)	246	15	X
Loveless (Bass)	141	20	X
Magnor (Richardson)	231	26	X
North (North White Ash)	119	9	X
North Twin	135	27	X
Pike	159	33	X
Pine (T36N, R16W, S24)	153	53	-
Pipe	290	68	X
Poplar	125	34	X
Sand	187	58	X
Somers	101	12	X
Staples	305	17	X
Straight	107	12	X
Wapogasset	1,186	32	X
White Ash	153	9	X
Wild Goose	182	12	X
TOTALS	16,585		36

Sources: Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Lakes, 2001

Canoeing/Streams

Excellent canoeing water exists in Polk County. The four major canoeing areas are the Apple River with 42 miles, the Trade River with 5 miles, the St. Croix with 39 miles, and Wolf Creek with 5 miles. There are canoe campsites and landings on the Apple and St. Croix Rivers.

Of course, other waters in the county are capable of floating a canoe; but only the rivers listed have the width, adequate water levels, stream movement, scenic quality and attendant features to provide a high-quality canoeing experience.

TABLE 10.
STREAMS IN POLK COUNTY

Streams	Miles
Class I	26.4
Class II	51.9
Class III	11.6
Trout Streams	89.9
Non-Trout Streams	110.1
TOTAL	200.0

Source: West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Canoeing Recommendations

The use of rivers and streams by canoeists depends not only on water conditions, but upon the quality of the surrounding lands. Therefore, efforts should be taken to prevent excessive stream bank development that would detract from an enjoyable canoeing experience. In order to enhance the Polk County canoe waterways and thus expand their usage, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended that the county acquire easements at selected points along the river way (the Apple River, for example) to establish comfort stations, pullover stops and possibly wilderness campsites.
2. It is further recommended that easements or purchases be made to enable canoe portages around various impediments or unnavigable sections.
3. High priority should be placed upon acquiring land around Little Falls (the two rapids section) by a public agency for public usage.

Water Skiing & Boating

These two distinct outdoor recreation activities are discussed together because they have similar spatial requirements and are frequently carried on simultaneously during a single recreation occasion. The lakes that are most suitable for water skiing are those which have 200+ acres of surface water and are free from most obstacles (see Table 11).

The twelve lakes listed in Table 11 have a total acreage of 9,925 acres, and all have public access boat ramps. Boating opportunities can be found on any lake in Table 9 with boat ramps, in addition to numerous additional lakes with boat ramps less than 100 acres in size.

TABLE 11 MOST SUITABLE BOATING & WATER SKIING LAKES
Polk County

Lakes	Acres	Lakes	Acres
Balsam Lake	2,054	Half Moon Lake	579
Bear Trap Lake	241	Long Lake	272
Big Butternut Lake	378	Magnor Lake	231
Big Round Lake	1,015	Pipe Lake	281
Bone Lake	1,781	Wapogasset Lake	1,186
Cedar Lake	1,100		
Deer Lake	807	TOTAL	9,925

Sources: Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Lakes, 2001

Boating &Water Skiing Recommendations

Maintain and continue to support County Boat Landings.

Fishing

The surface waters of Polk County provide excellent fishing opportunities. Above-average trout and walleye fishing are available, along with good-quality northern pike, largemouth bass and bluegill fishing. Some lake sturgeon fishing is also available on the St. Croix River and Clam River.

Trout fishing is available in 36 streams (89.9 miles). The most notable streams include McKenzie Creek, Sand Creek, Parker Creek, Clam River, Trade River, Wolf Creek, Cowan Creek, and Cold Creek. The various species of fish found in Polk County's lakes are summarized in Table 12.

TABLE 12 NUMBER OF LAKES CONTAINING VARIOUS FISH SPECIES
Polk County

Type of Fish	Number of Lakes	Type of Fish	Number of Lakes
Bass (LM/SM)	121/2	Pan Fish	122
Musky	11	Trout	8
Northern Pike	99	Walleye	29

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Wisconsin Lakes, 2001.

Fishing Recommendations

Some counties in Wisconsin and in other states have designated certain trout streams/rivers as fly fishing only. These waterways are usually semi-wild with naturally reproducing trout populations. This feature adds another recreational dimension to the county and attracts certain clients from throughout the state.

Swimming

Most of the major lakes and rivers in Polk County have public swimming beaches. The existing supply of public beaches is currently twelve. The acreage of these beaches is estimated to be 14.6 acres at the present time (see Table 13).

TABLE 13 BEACH SUPPLY & ACREAGE-Polk County

Beaches	Number of Toilet Units	Acres	Bath House Units
1. Balsam Lake	1	1.0	1
2. Big Butternut	1	.5	-
3. Bone Lake, North End	1	.3	-
4. Clear Lake	-	.5	-
5. Half Moon Lake	-	1.0	-
6. Interstate, Lake of the Dells	1	1.0	1
7. Interstate, St. Croix River	1	2.0	-
8. Magnor Lake	1	1.3	1
9. Sand Lake	1	7.0	-
10. Osceola Landing	1	2.0	-
11. Dwight Lake	1	.5	
12. Pipe Lake	-	1.0	-
TOTAL	9	18.1	3

Source: West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Swimming Recommendations

It is recommended that existing beach facilities be modernized, for example, by upgrading toilets, bath houses and piers. The existing beaches, combined with the pool facilities at Osceola, Unity, Dalles House, Holiday Inn, and Turtle Lake, have addressed the demand for swimming amenities identified in past Polk County Outdoor Recreational Plans from the county's perspective.

LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES

Public and Private Campgrounds

Polk County has a total of 24 licensed public, private, and group campgrounds, with a total of 823 sites and 26 tourist boarding cabins. This is an increase in the number of campgrounds and sites since 1998, but still lower than the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The campgrounds of Polk County vary in quality from site to site; but in general, most sites include picnic tables, toilet facilities, playground equipment, and lake or stream access for swimming, boating and fishing. A limited number of campgrounds specialize in group events and activities.

Most Polk County campgrounds are privately owned. Most of the campgrounds are relatively small, with the largest campground in Polk County licensed for 93 sites. Polk County Parks maintains one campground with 15 sites within the Apple River Park.

According to the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, the most influential factors in selecting a campground or RV Park are:

-Closeness to nature
-The location of clean, high quality restrooms within the premises.
-Camp ground safety

Polk County managed facility:
Apple River Park-15 sites

TABLE 14. CAMPGROUNDS Polk County

Campgrounds	*1986*	*1991*	*1998*	*2004*	*2018*
Establishments	32	28	17	23	24
Number of Sites	1,065	937	645	838	823
Average Sites	33.3	33.5	37.9	36.4	34.3

Source: Recreation Resources Center, UW-Extension

Campground Recommendations

The major concerns with public and private campgrounds are the number of available sites and the quality of these sites.

Addition RV sites should be added to the system.

The camping section (520.4.4) of the Polk County Forest Comprehensive Land-Use Plan should be amended to prohibit camping in high-use and high-visibility areas. The County should continue to monitor the conditions and standards of the public campgrounds, just as the Zoning Administrator, in concert with the Department of Health and Social Services, monitors the private campgrounds.

Picnicking

In Polk County, both public and private picnic areas are available. Picnicking areas are provided by local, county, state and private sources. Many of the picnic areas are publicly owned. There are a total of approximately 47 city, village, and township parks.

Polk County managed facilities:

Atlas Park
Alhgren
Black Brook Park
Lotus Lake Park
DD Kennedy Park
Sommers Lake
Mackie Lake
Sterling Trailhead

Picnicking Recommendations

Polk County's picnicking inventory indicates that sufficient acreage exists to contain the number of tables indicated by the demand section, there are presently not enough tables located on that acreage for larger events (e.g. family reunions). The major emphasis on this activity should be to increase the number of tables on the existing sites. This method of attacking the substandard number of tables, however, should not preclude the inclusion of a picnic area in conjunction with other recreational activity when it is indicated.

It is recommended that support facilities (e.g., shelters, playground equipment) be increased for county parks. Material selection and construction should be carefully considered since such facilities and picnic tables have been subject to vandalism in the past. It is also recommended that for the south central and southwest portions of the county, additional public picnicking facilities be developed. Also, a day-use park should be developed in the southwestern section of the county.

Hunting

Polk County provides very good hunting opportunities. There are approximately 66,000 acres of public land available for hunting (see Table 15 & Map 7). The game species most prevalent in these areas are deer, squirrel, fox, raccoon, ducks, geese, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and some pheasants. Some of the Wisconsin DNR wildlife areas listed in Table 15 includes the lease of private land. In addition, there are thousands of acres of privately-owned land open to public hunting under the State Managed Forest Tax Law Programs, this acreage figure changes on an annual basis. The managed forest law and forest crop law lands shown on Map 7 may not all be open for public hunting, however, much of the hunting in Polk County is done on private land, for it is impossible to supply enough public land for all the hunters in the county. In this situation, it is important to encourage land owners to allow hunting on their land and hunters to respect the land owners' rights.

TABLE 15. PUBLIC LANDS AVAILABLE FOR HUNTING Polk County 2019

Area	Acres
DNR – Interstate Park	1324
DNR – Garfield Township, hunting and fishing	175
DNR – Land South of Black Brook, hunting and fishing	181
DNR – Snake Creek Fishery Area	200
DNR – St. Croix River State Forest (approximate potential)	6,000
DNR – Rice Beds Creek Wildlife Area	3,119
DNR – McKenzie Creek Wildlife Area	5,620
DNR – Sand Creek Fishery Area (Polk & Burnett County)	1,326
DNR – Loon Lake Wildlife Area (Polk & Barron County)	2,752
DNR – Behning Creek Fishery Area	171
DNR – Balsam Branch Wildlife Area	180
DNR – Joel Marsh Wildlife Area	1,347
DNR – Wagon Landing Springs Fishery Area	67
DNR – Parker Creek Fishery Area	219
DNR – Governor Knowles State Forest (Polk County portion)	abt. 11,000
DNR—Straight Lake State Park/Wildlife Area	3425
DNR—Private Open MFL 2019	5,686
Polk County Forest	17,166
Town of Sterling Forest	4767
Clam Falls	139
Scattered Parks (county or township owned undeveloped land)	1,134
TOTAL	**abt. 66,000**

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Polk County Manages 17,166 acres of County Forest

Hunting Recommendation
Public Hunting maps should be made available to the Public

Shooting Rages

There are six shooting ranges in Polk County, all run by private clubs: Balsam Lake Rod & Gun Club, Fox Creek Gun Club, Osceola Gun Club, Cushing Rifle Club, Richardson/Clayton Gun Club, South Fork Sporting Club, and Amery Club. The Polk County Sherriff's office has expressed interest in the past to construct a shooting range facility that provides an area for training and public use.

Polk County Facilities:
None

Shooting Range Recommendation
Work with the sheriff's office to select a site, a facility design, and hours open to the public.

Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding

Trollhaugen is the only downhill ski resort in the county. It is located at Dresser and serves between 1,300 and 1,400 skiers and snowboarders on an average weekend day. There are a total of 22 runs at Trollhaugen.

One characteristics of the downhill skiing enthusiast is the willingness to travel long distances to ski. Therefore, this inventory would not be complete without mentioning the nearby facilities in neighboring counties. Wild Mountain ski area is located in Chisago County, Minnesota, to the west.

Cross Country Skiing & Snow-Shoeing

Cross country skiing is a recreational activity that is increasing in popularity. Many areas in the county are available for this use with over 43 miles available (see Table 16). Many of these trails may also be available for snow-shoeing. As of July 2019 there are four cross country ski trails. The Cattail and the Gandy Dancer are open to Cross Country skiers but many skiers chose not to ski these trails as they are open to Snowmobiles and or ATV's. Many areas in the County are open to ungroomed cross country skiing and snow shoeing.

TABLE 16 CROSS COUNTRY SKI TRAILS
Polk County

Trails	Groomed Miles
1. Balsam Branch	12.0
2. Interstate Park	10.9
3. Trade River Trail	8
4. Stower 7 Lakes Trail	13.0
TOTAL	43.9

Source: West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

In addition to these, Interstate Park has two miles of snowshoeing trails; and many of the walking trails discussed in the next section are also available for snowshoeing.

Cross-Country Skiing & Snow-Shoeing Recommendations

These trails are basically of two types: the rough, multi-use trails and the groomed, marked, and specifically designated trails. The continuation of current expansion plans is recommended. Communities are encouraged to establish trail systems in or near their vicinities. To improve participation at the Balsam Branch ski area, Polk County has installed lighting at the Balsam Branch ski area. The recently acquired Alhgren property as well as Kennedy park should be considered for areas to open up to non- groomed cross country skiing.

Snow-shoeing, by virtue of the sport, does not require any sort of trail system; all that is needed is open space. Non groomed snow -shoeing is open to all user within the County Forest.

Designated Recreational Trails

Designated recreation trails are those for which the County provides a designated trail and/or facility. The County currently provides trail systems that accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. Trails for non-motorized recreation are offered within state trails, county parks and forest. In addition, walking trails are provided within many of the public lands throughout the County. At the time this plan was written the Stower Seven Lakes Trail is the only designated non-motorized State trail within the County. The Gandy Dancer, Cattail and Sawmill trails all allow motorized recreation to some extent. The Gandy Dancer, Cattail, and Sawmill trails, and Stower Seven Lakes trails have separate master plans. Any changes associated with allowed uses on the proceeding trails will have to be addressed in the appropriate master plan. Whenever possible, multiple uses of various trail systems are encouraged. Wherever possible, attempts will be made to avoid user conflicts. County staff will continue to pursue grants for the designated recreation trails in reference to the allowed uses.

Hiking/ Walking/Running

Hiking trails in Polk County are used for casual walking, nature study, bird watching, hunting, photography and many other uses.

Approximately 95 trails exist within the county. Many of these 95 trails exist within villages, cities and Conservancy lands. These trails are mapped out and can be found within the recreational viewer. The most notable trails are located at Apple River County Park, Lotus Lake County Park, Gandy Dancer State Trail, the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail, and Interstate Park. Other trails exist on county forest land and parks (see Table 17 and Map 7), and three miles in Governor Knowles State Forest. It is recognized the Ice Age NST provides some 59 miles of nationally and state designated trail in Polk County for hiking and cross country skiing and it is an integral aspect of the county recreational trail network. The Ice Age NST is supported by a triad of the National Park Service (as a unit of the NPS it has a superintendent), the Wisconsin DNR and the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA). The IATA Indianhead Chapter, one of its 21 chapters across the state of Wisconsin, is based in Polk County.

Table 17. Hiking /Walking/ Running Trails Polk County

Area	Miles
Apple River County Park	1
Alhgren County Park	1
DD Kennedy County Park	1.5
Cattail Trail	12
County Forest	25
Gandy Dancer Trail	30
Stower Seven Lakes Trail	13
Lotus Lake County Park	1
Garfield Recreation Area	5
Ice Age Trail	59
DNR McKenzie Creek	6
DNR Straight Lake	5
DNR Interstate Park	10
DNR Governor Knowles	3
Villages & Cities	Abt.1
Total	167.5

Does not add to 187.5 miles due to the ice age trail being on part of the County Forest mileage and the Gandy Dancer mileage.

Some 6.5 miles of the IANST in Polk County are on County Forest lands. The county considers the trail segments that cross county lands (as well as the rest of the trail in the county) to be of ongoing importance to the recreation plans of the county and to the integrity of the 1,000 mile trail across Wisconsin that has its western terminus in Interstate Park. (See Map 7).

The Stower Seven Lakes State Trail is a natural westward extension of the Cattail Trail and terminates approximate one mile east of Dresser on 90th Avenue. This county-operated trail has limestone base and has been brushed and graded. It is maintained for walking, hiking, running biking, and cross-country skiing. Motorized vehicles (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles) are not allowed. Additional trails near population centers are likely to be the most frequently used. Hiking is also allowed on the Polk County Forest. All developed trails and roads are open to use by hikers. Trails are maintained through volunteer organizations and periodically by the Parks department. Hiking and walking are allowed on the Cattail and Sawmill trail; however it should be noted that walking and hiking on the Cattail is not recommended by the WIDNR.

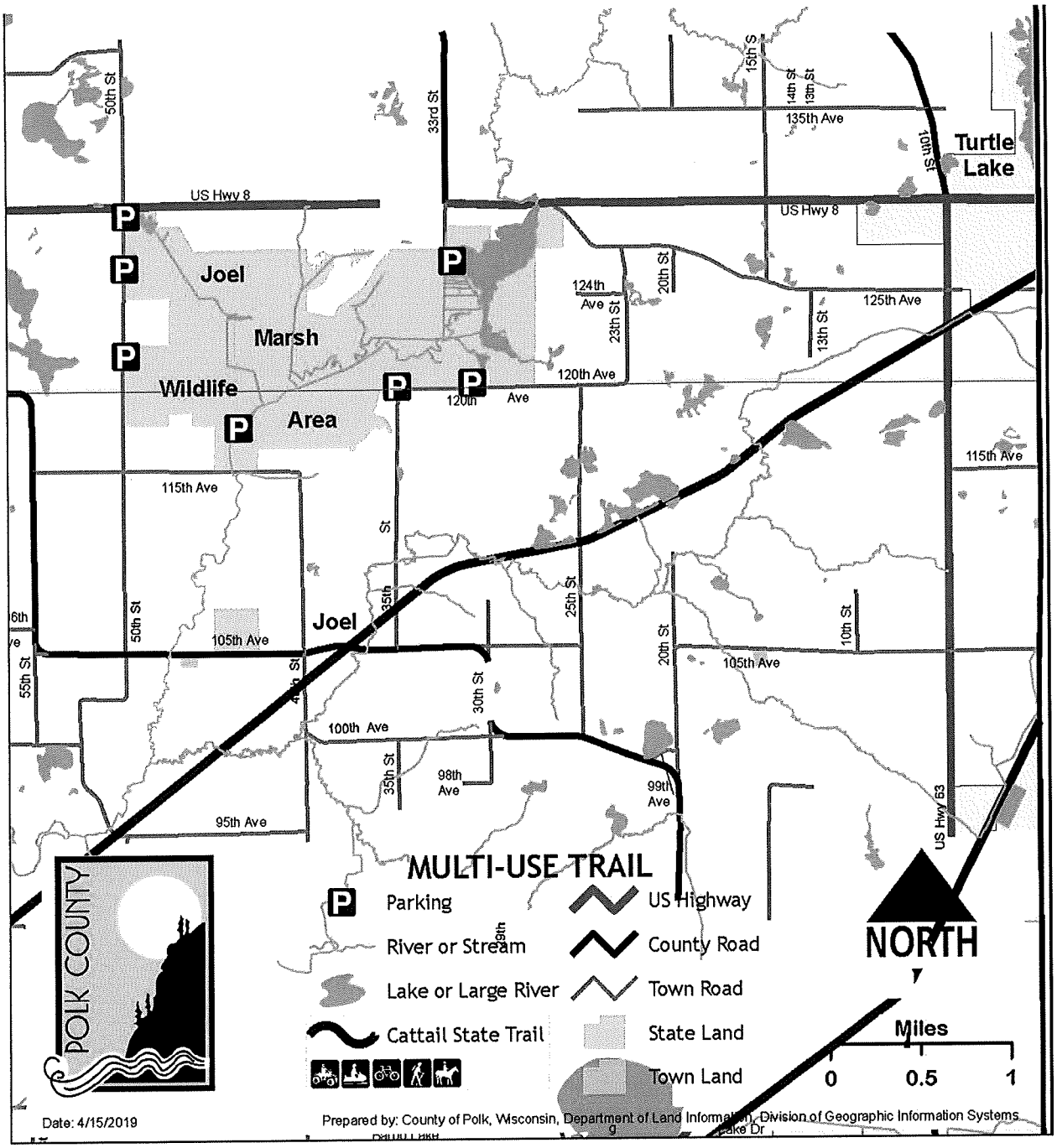
Hiking / Walking/ Running Recommendations

(1)Trail development and a trail map of the County Forest needs to be added to the recreation viewer. (2) Work with Polk County cities, villages, towns and adjacent Counties to develop a comprehensive plan that provides trail interlinks. Future examples include working with adjacent Counties such as Burnett, Barron, St. Croix and Chisago County as well as the cities and villages within Polk County. (3) Continue to provide trails that are safe, are long enough for runners that are training, and finally provide for community events/fundraisers.

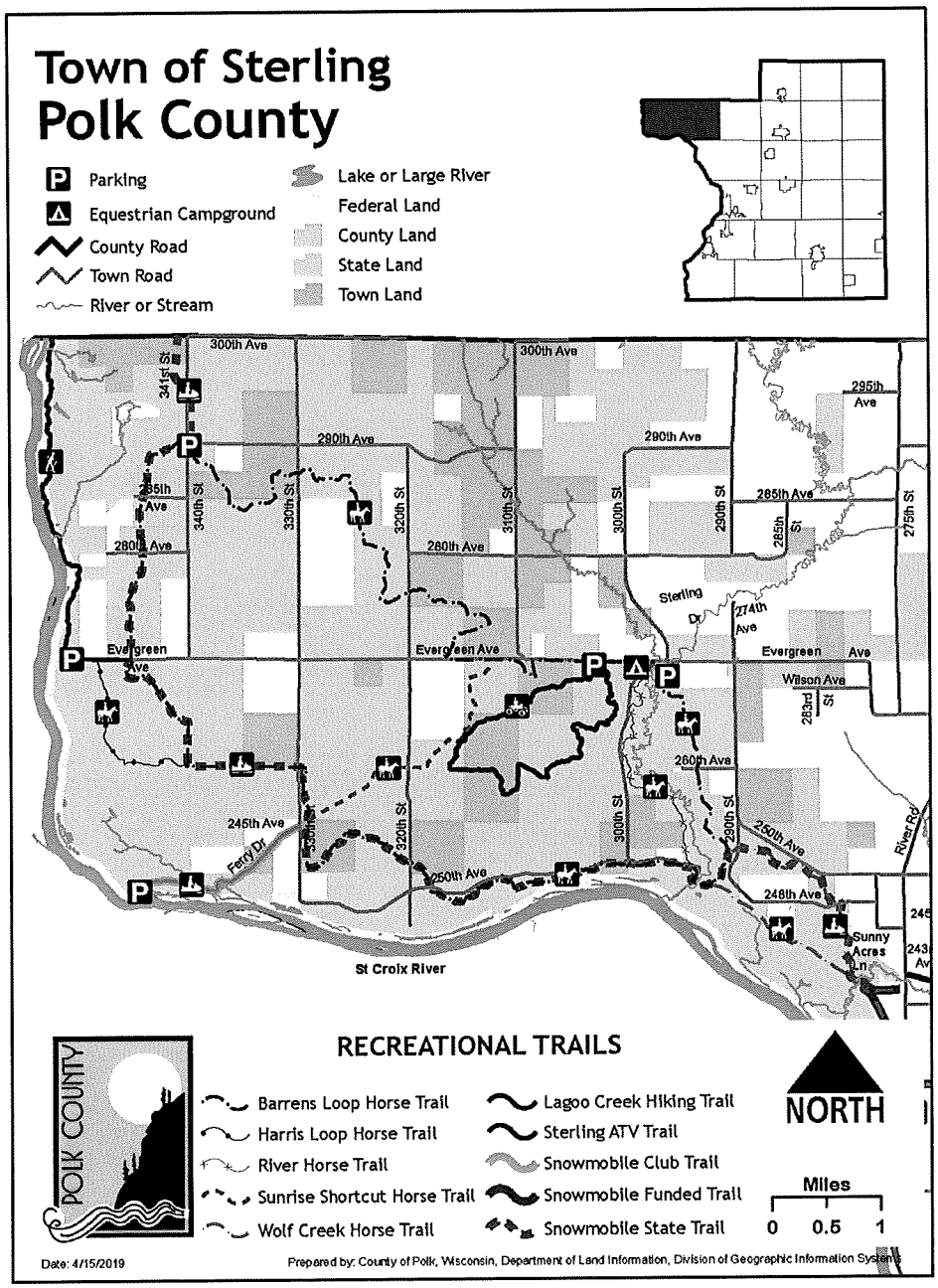
Horseback Riding

The interest in horseback riding in Polk County is apparent by the use of the trails within Sterling Township. Most horseback riding is done by horse owners on their own properties. Horseback trail riding now occurs on the multi-purpose 30-mile trail system of Governor Knowles State Forest, the Polk County Forest, the Town of Sterling Forest and the Cattail Trail from Joel to the county-line. Governor Knowles States Forest contains a dedicated camping area for Equestrian use.

Map 8. Horseback riding portion allowed on the Cattail Trail Joel to the Barron County



Map 9. Horse Trails and ATV Loop Town of Sterling



Horseback Riding Recommendations

The County will continue to support horseback riding on the sterling trail.
The Cattail Trail/Stower Seven Trail is currently being evaluated to allow horseback riding on the entire length of the trail.

Bicycling/Mountain Biking/Fat Tire

Bicycling is another activity that is increasing in popularity. There are two dedicated bike paths in the county, The Gandy Dancer Trail and the Stower Seven Lakes State Trail are available for bicycling. The 'gandy' is a 97-mile, trail running from St. Croix Falls to Superior along a former Soo Line Railbed. The 48 mile section in Polk and Burnett counties is a limestone surfaced state trail, requiring a state trail pass for bike riders ages 16 and over. Approximately 30 miles of the Gandy traverse Polk County. The 'S7LT' stretches from one mile east of Dresser to Amery, a span of just over 13 miles. This trail is compacted limestone and is open year round. The Cattail Trail, as well as the newly named Sawmill Trail are open to bicycles. The Garfield Recreational area is also open to mountain and fat tire biking. Clubs such as the Woolly bike club have established trails in St Croix Falls. The club has established a 6.8 miles of closed loop trail within the City of St Croix Falls for mountain and fat tire biking.

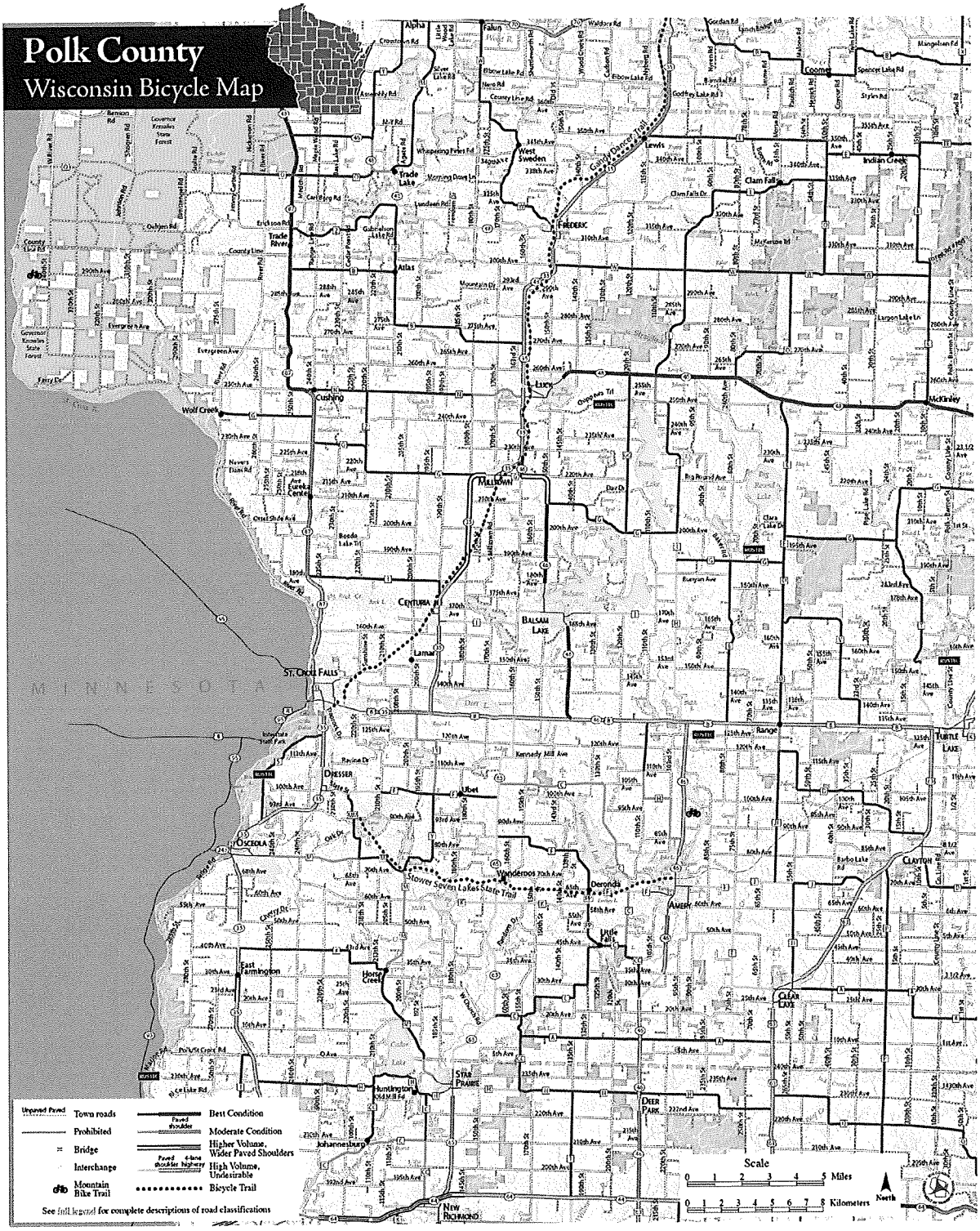
In addition to trail riding, there are also many miles of scenic county and local roads that are available for bicycle touring. However, riders should be careful since these routes may not be specifically designed for bicycle use. Information on the most suitable touring routes is available from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (See Map 10 on the next page).

Off-road riding is another form of bicycling that has increased in popularity during the past few years. The forest roads, logging access trails, and other trails throughout the county forest provide many miles of off-road biking opportunities. Opportunities exist to connect bicycle trails on Polk County properties with adjoining public properties and bicycle routes on local roads and state highways.

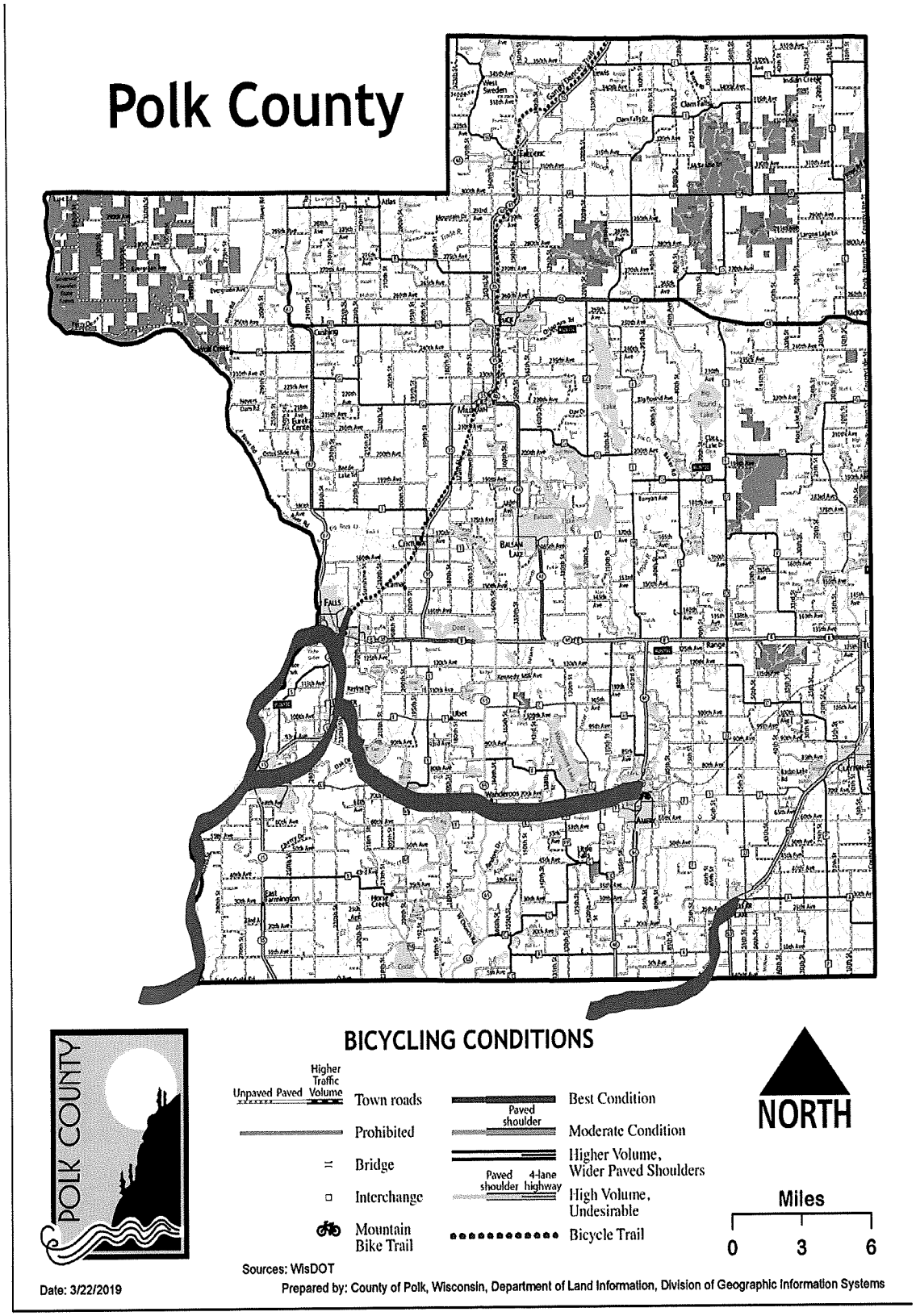
Bicycling Recommendations

Recommendations for bicycling are as follows: (1) designate alternative routes off main highways; (2) include low-cost detailed maps showing routes in the county brochure; (3) routes near regionally significant features; (4) use of State Trails, if surfaced. Develop intensive use areas on the County Forest such as Sommers lake for fat tire/mountain biking. (5) Work with Polk County cities, villages, local bike clubs and adjacent Counties to develop a comprehensive plan that links existing bicycle paths.

MAP 10. Bicycling Conditions for Polk County State Trails and County Roads



Map 11. Potential Trail Interlinks- Stower Seven, Gandy Dancer, St. Croix County, and Chisago County MN. (Red Lines on map)



Snowmobiling

Polk County residents registered 3497 snowmobiles for 2019, an increase of 29 registrations since 2008. There are 345 miles of snowmobile trails in the county; excluding club trails (see Map 12). Many of these trails are connected to other counties as part of the statewide trail system and serve enthusiasts State-wide.

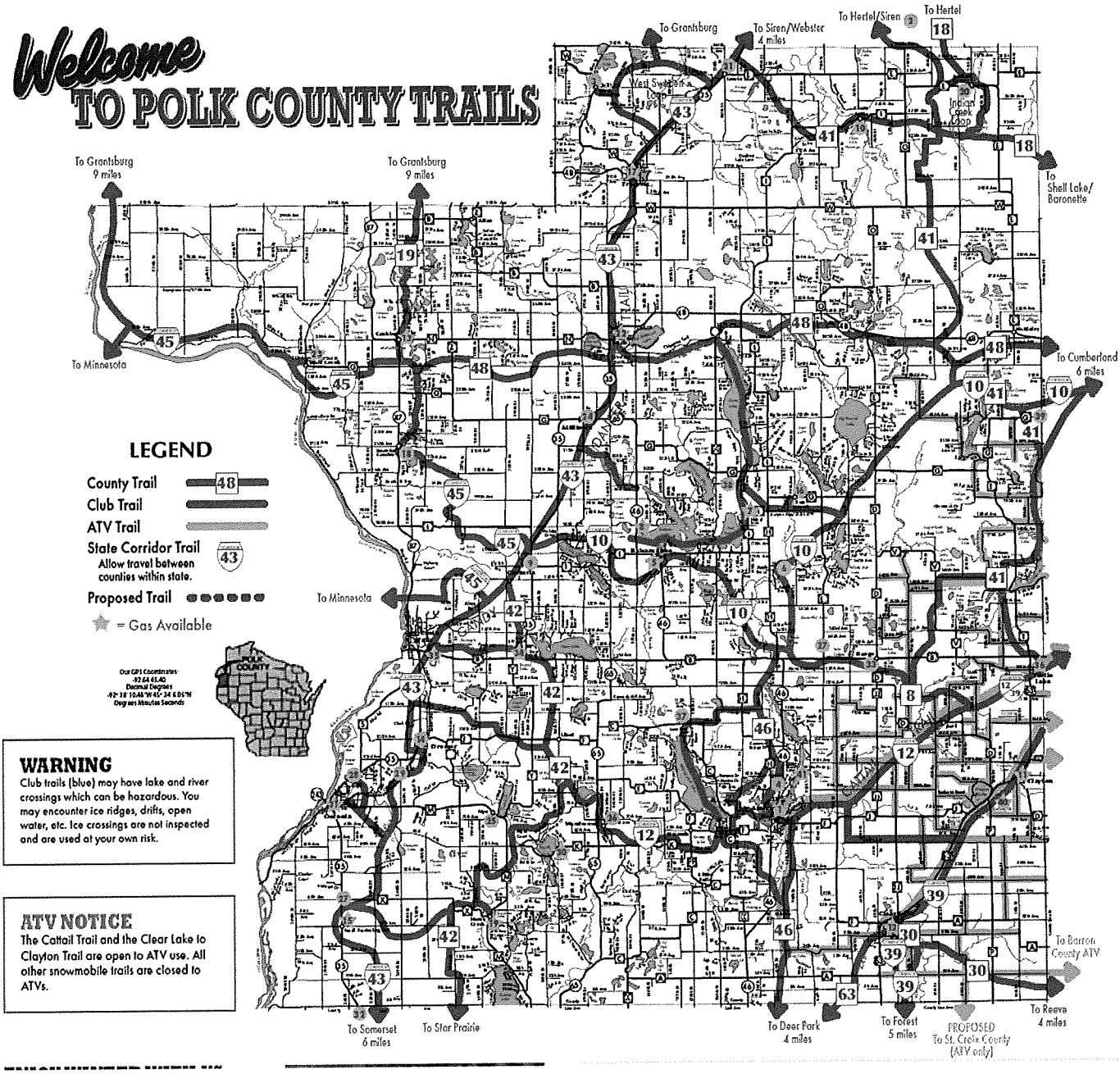
Snowmobiling Recommendations

Polk County pursues an active and ambitious snowmobile trail development program. It is recommended that the county continue to maintain the existing trail system as well as develop the proposed trail system shown on Map 12. Whenever compatible with soil and topography conditions and present land use, snowmobile trails should be developed on a multi-use basis. Utilization for multiple activities would justify future development which should include shelters and sanitary facilities. All new trails must be well marked, designed for safety, and long enough to provide variety and challenge.

The priorities for development of the Polk County snowmobile trail system were formulated by state program priorities and local desires. The criteria used for prioritizing future development are as follows:

1. To complete all point-to-point trails which give access to all population centers and support facilities.
2. To provide tie-ins with adjoining county systems.
3. To develop scenic trail loops within the county.
4. To develop trails on public land as best as feasible.

MAP 12. SNOWMOBILE TRAILS Polk County



ATV/UTV/OFF ROAD MOTORCYCLES

In 2019, there are 6238 ATV's and 1583 UTV's registered in Polk County. This is up from 5127 ATV's registered in 2008. The following is a brief summary of the ATV trails found in Polk County:

1. *Sterling Trail.* This is a seven-mile trail with a picnic area, restroom and parking area at the trailhead. The trail is open to ATVs June 1st to November 15th. Closed to motorcycles.
2. *Cattail Trail.* This 11.8-mile trail is open year-round for ATV and motorcycle use and for snowmobile use during snow cover.
3. *Sawmill.* This eleven-mile multi-use trail is open year-round for ATV and motorcycle use and for snowmobile use during snow cover.
4. County Roads ATV/UTV Routes. Ordinance 32-18 allows for ATV/UTV's to use County Roads. Riders must stay on pavement and the speed limit is 35 miles per hour. 320 miles were added to the system.
5. Township Roads
6. City and Villages

   City of Amery- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed on streets
   City of St Croix Falls -ATV/UTV traffic is allowed on limited roads per ordinance.
   Village of Centuria- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed except for Main Street from Superior to Polk Ave.
   Village of Clayton- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed in accordance with their Ordinance V1 Chapter 494.
   Village of Clear Lake- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed only on approved routes through the Village.
   Village of Dresser- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed under Municipal Code Sec 7.14
   Village of Frederic- ATV/UTV traffic is allowed on all village streets but excludes State Highways.
   Village of Luck- ATV/UTV is allowed except for main street and State Highways
   Village of Milltown- ATV/UTV are allowed on routes planned by ATV club.
   Village of Osceola- Does not allow ATV/UTV traffic on any streets.

ATV and Off Road Motorcycle Recommendations

There is a notable lack of sufficient off road trails for ATV use in the county. It may be possible that some existing or planned snowmobile trails could also be used for ATV use, or the county should consider dedicating an area or additional trail system for ATV use. Care should be taken in identifying such areas or trails in order to minimize any negative environmental impacts or use conflicts.

Partner with the town of Sterling, Governor Knowles State Forest to establish an ATV trail from Wolf Creek to the Burnett County Line.

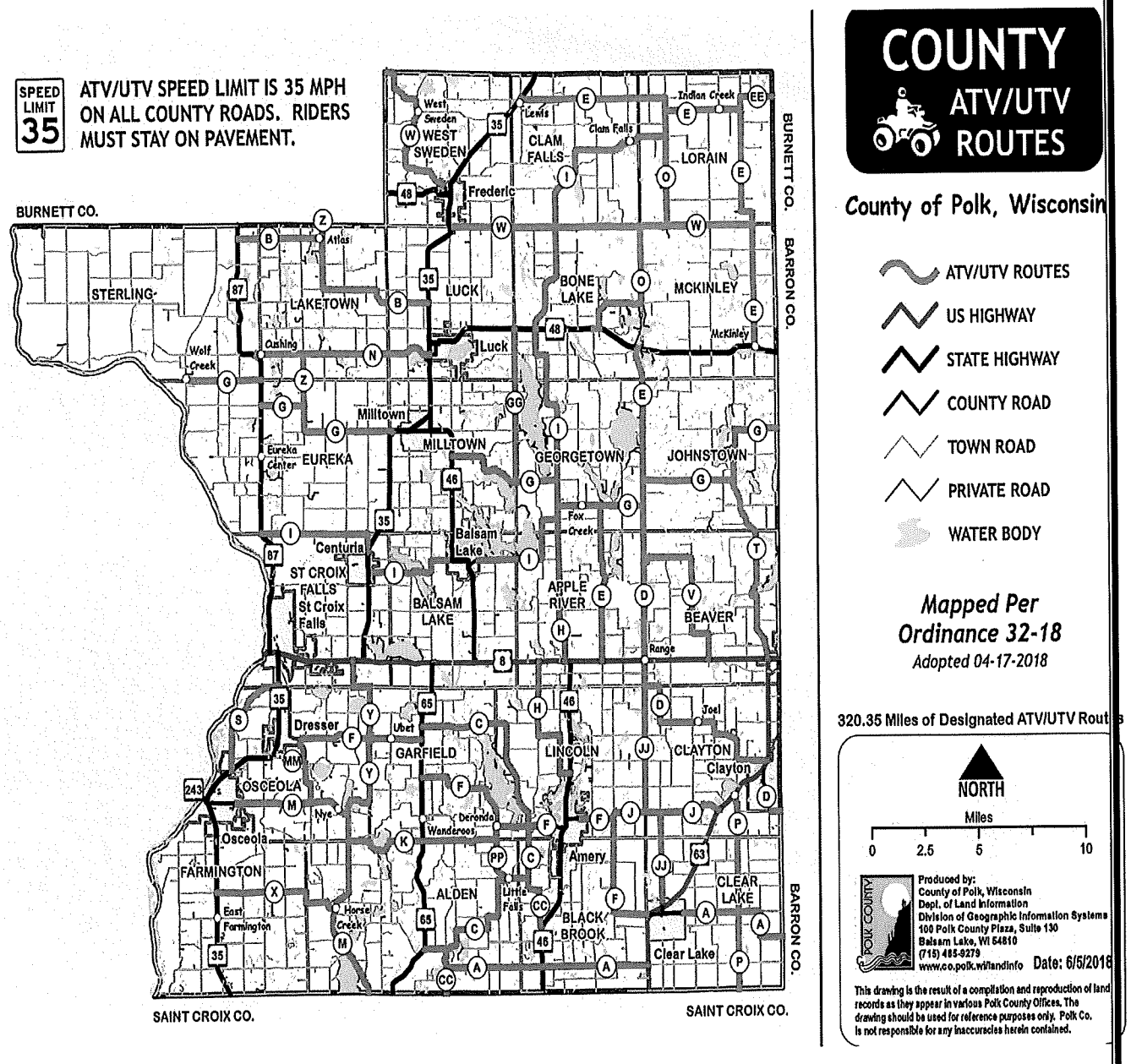
Polk County has designated some areas for Off Road Motorcycle/ATV usage. The county should continue to assess the needs of this activity and plan accordingly.

Investigate the development of an intensive use "play area".

Develop a County wide map of routes and trails that includes town, city, village, and county routes and trails.

There is a growing demand for riding opportunities. Polk County as well as a number of towns, cities and villages allowing ATV's/UTV's has increased. Most ATV/UTV riders prefer trails or routes that are winding and narrower rather than straight and wide. However local roads, even if they are straight and wide, that provide connection from one desirable location to another is generally considered an acceptable riding experience.

Map 13. Polk County Highway ATV/UTV Routes



Sightseeing & Pleasure Driving

Polk County is fortunate in having a well-developed system of highways with a landscape which is very appealing to motorists. Rolling fields, lakes, farms and woodlands are prevalent. U.S. Highway 8 is the major east-west artery and is located in the lower third of the county. U.S. Highway 63 runs through the southeast corner of the county. Important routes that connect north and south Polk County are State Highways 35, 46, and 87. All of these routes receive heavy use by vacationers and commuters.

In the past, local units of government have not deliberately provided any major opportunities for sightseers and pleasure drivers. However, this trend is on the verge of reversing. Some communities have established wayside areas, while others have improved or are planning to improve their community park systems to accommodate visitors. Some communities have erected signs on main roads directing travelers to local parks and extending a welcome to use them. Efforts by Wisconsin's Department of Transportation to accommodate sightseers have been more direct. Waysides with water, toilets, and picnic areas are maintained on major state highways.

Several scenic routes have been identified for Polk County. These routes are part of the Rustic Road program sponsored by the DOT. The routes are listed below:

1. RUSTIC ROAD 28

Location: Polk County. Mains Crossing (old Highway 8), beginning at the intersection of County Highway H then extending east to County Highway D.

Length: 5.2 miles

2.RUSTIC ROAD 41

Location: Polk County. Clara Lake Road between County E and County G.

Length: 2.3 miles

3. RUSTIC ROAD 67

Location: Barron/Polk Counties. Portions of Pine Road, 13 3/4 Avenue, West County Line Road and 16th Avenue, forming a loop from US 8 to US 63.

Length: 4.6 miles

4. RUSTIC ROAD 93

Location: Polk County. Chippewa Trail from 145th Street to County GG.

Length: 2.8 miles

5. RUSTIC ROAD 101

Location: Polk County. County S forming a loop off WIS 35 between Osceola and St. Croix Falls.

Length: 4.3 miles

6. RUSTIC ROAD 103

Location: St. Croix and Polk counties. Portions of 230th Avenue, Marine Road, County Line Avenue and Polk/St. Croix Road through the Town of Somerset in St. Croix County and the Town of Farmington in Polk County.

Length: 2.8 miles

Sightseeing and Pleasure Driving Recommendations

Both of these activities can be made more pleasurable by specific and normally low-cost programs sponsored by the county. Some of the programs have been mentioned in the preceding section of the action program. In addition to these, it is recommended that marked tour routes be established to guide motorists through the most scenic and interesting areas of the county. Tour routes should also pass places where people can find rest, food, and entertainment.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Polk County is committed to providing persons with disabilities access to park amenities. All parks proposed or scheduled for refurbishment should include features that will aid handicapped people.

Most county park facilities are handicapped-accessible and in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Big Butternut Lake, Bone Lake and Lake O'The Dalles (Thaxter), Magnor Lake have wheelchair-accessible piers, as does the county-owned Kennedy Environmental Area.

Even with these accessible facilities, the options to handicapped individuals are limited; and many existing park facilities are older and require improvements to ramps, paths, water bubblers, camping sites, etc., in order to increase accessibility. This Outdoor Recreation Plan update recognizes these needs.

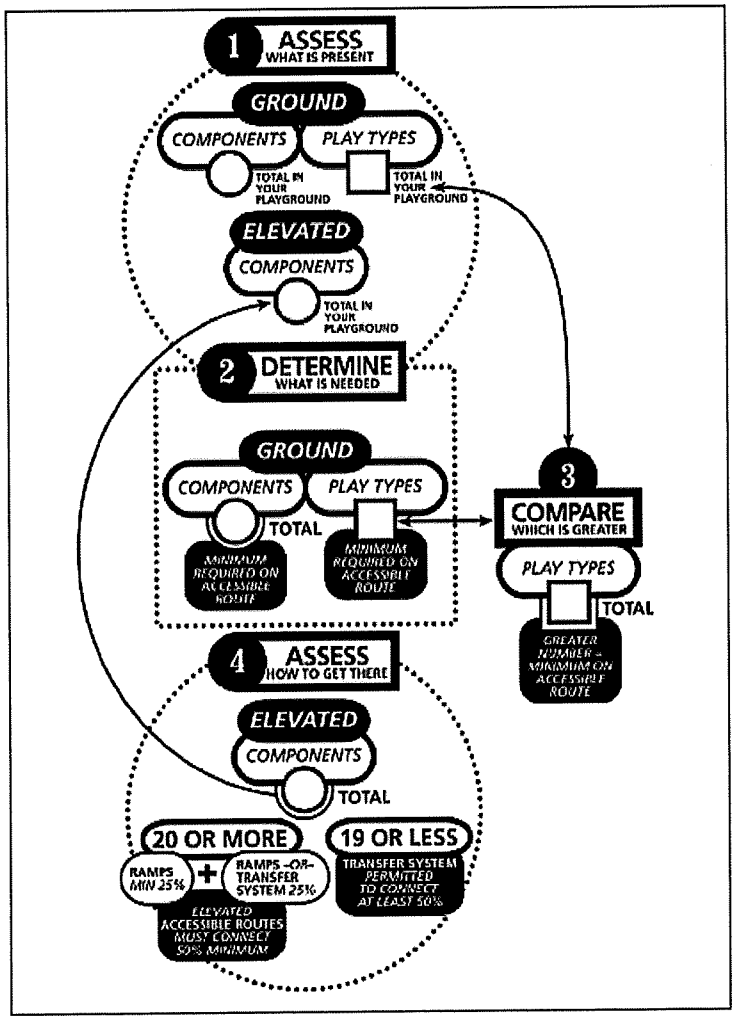
As can be seen in the diagram to the right, ADA design guidelines for park and playground accessibility contain many details and can be complicated.

These guidelines include details such as surface types, surface widths, slopes, handrails, and transfer stations. At least one of each type of ground-level play component that is present in the play area must be on an accessible route. However, the number and variety of ground-level play components required to be on an accessible route is also determined by the number of elevated components provided in the play area.

The U.S. Access Board has issued a guide to the ADA accessibility guidelines for play areas which is available at their website: www.access-board.gov.

Municipalities may be required to obtain professional assistance in meeting these guidelines.

Figure 2. Evaluating a Play Area for ADA Accessibility



Source: U.S. Access Board, http://www.access-board.gov/

X.
OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION
Recreational needs within the county have been identified with input from: 1) public input – informal and needs assessment surveys; 2) on-going facility assessment; and 3) a review of past plans – including the Wisconsin SCORP 2017 2022 and the Wisconsin DNR Recreation Opportunities Analysis 2017.

PUBLIC INPUT ASSESSMENT
Polk County Parks Department staff continuously receives public input from users about its parks and forest resources. Valuable input for this report came from these informal conversations and interactions.

Also, in order to gage perception of park lands and operations within the County, the Polk County Environmental Services Committee decided to conduct a needs assessment survey both online and as part of a public input meeting on September 24th, 2019. The survey was filled out by 550 respondents online and by seven people who attended the input meeting. The survey was developed to gain insights into the opinions regarding recreational policy and issues from the users of Polk County recreation facilities. On September 24th, 2019, and on the online survey, the assessment asked the following questions:

1. What county facilities do you use for outdoor recreation activities?
2. What recreation activities do you participate in at these county properties?
3. What kind of experience are you looking for during that recreation activity? (example: if you bike, would you prefer paved roads, gravel trails and/or single track trails? If you ride ATV would you prefer a wide connector route to ride and/or a narrower, winding two-track trail?)
4. Are there improvements that you feel could be made to enhance your recreation experience on county facilities? (Please list the facility and the improvements)
5. If you currently do not use one of the Polk County recreation facilities, what additional recreation opportunities would you like to see Polk County provide?

FACILITY ASSESSMENT
Every year, County staff visit all recreational sites to conduct an assessment of all properties. Since the 1960's, an accepted practice has been to adopt a uniform national land standard, such as 10 acres per 1000 population, for park planning. A standard amount of land for parks and recreation cannot be universal for a park. A standard land measure is only useful for specific facilities like determining how much land is needed for a specific use like a baseball diamond. The number of baseball diamonds and other facilities are not the same among similar sized communities nationally. The basis of this revised approach to park and recreation standards is to

create a level of service as defined by the customers' needs rather than an arbitrary standard. The level of service is generated locally for each type of park, trail, or public access to a water body. Public input is collected in multiple ways and the needs for a particular park, trail, or public access to a water body are determined. When specific facilities are needed, then facility standards are used to design the facility and budget for the necessary land, materials, and labor to satisfy that need. A needs driven and facilities based park planning approach presents the current demand for park and recreation opportunities. The size of a park site is determined by the number of facilities needed to satisfy the active recreation demand within the service area of each park.

The size of a park is determined by three criteria:

1. Physical geography. Does the site have steep hills, woodlands, or wetlands? Such natural features are useful for exploration, conservation, and aesthetic buffers.
2. Park facilities. What activities are allowed or will be allowed? How much land is needed for each use?
3. Buffers. How much land within the park is needed to separate different uses? How much land is needed for future expansion? Maybe a park will not expand within 2-years, but within 10-20 years expansion may be imminent. When the opportunity to buy land exists, then reaction must be swift to seize the opportunity. A park growth boundary should be created for this reason.

INPUT AT PUBLIC HEARING (Date here: Month X, 2019)
The Polk County Environmental Services Committee held a public hearing on Month X, 2019, from XX:00 a.m. A public hearing notice was posted and it noted that the draft plan was available on the County website for the public to view and comment on.

Public Notice

On September 24th from 6pm to 9pm, the Polk County Environmental Services Committee will be holding a special meeting to obtain input from the public concerning the Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024. The meeting will be held at the Polk County Government Center in the County Board Room #112. The draft plan can be viewed at:

Https: //www.co.polk.wi.us/parks

Comments can also be emailed to polk.recreation@co.polk.wi.us

Online survey at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RGNH8N8. Please complete the survey prior to Oct. 1.

Summary of Public Comments

The Summary of the Public Comments received by staff, survey monkey, and the public open house are summarized below and also in figures 3-6.

Figure 3. Usage by Polk County managed facilities.

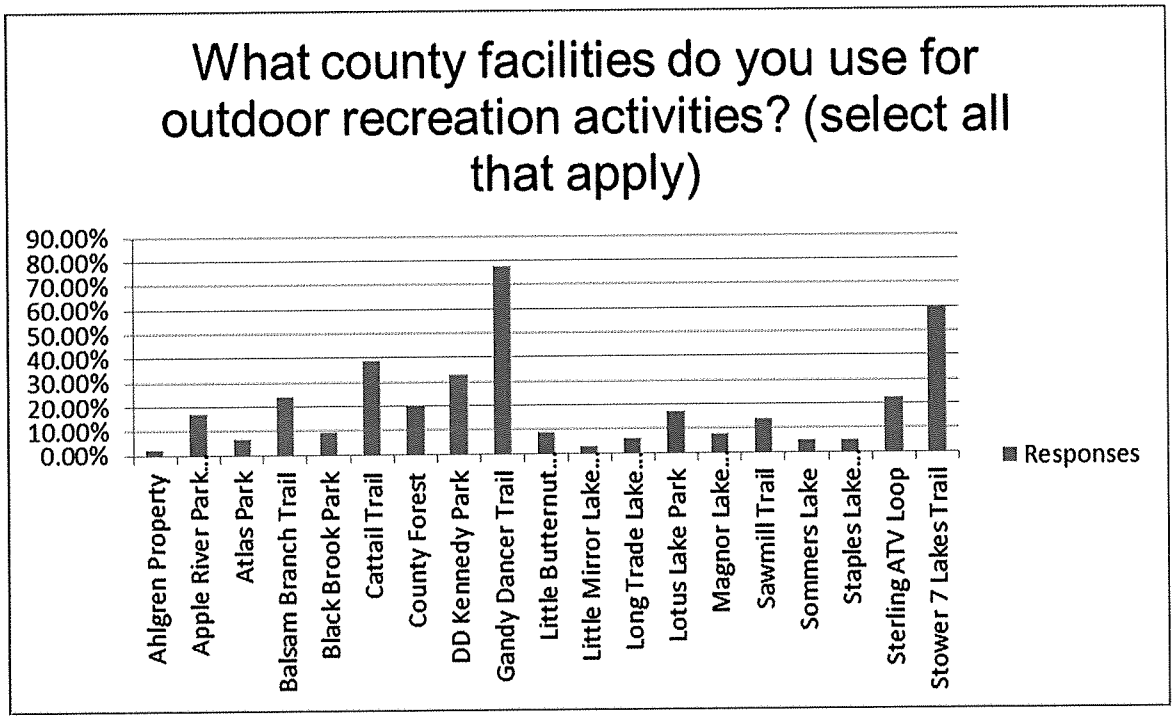


Figure 4. Recreational usage within Polk County.

Hike/Bike/Run	285	22.3%
Bike	257	20.1%
ATV/UTV	202	15.8%
Snowmobile	170	13.3%
Skiing	84	6.6%
Fishing	55	4.3%
Snowshoe	34	2.7%
Picinic	30	2.3%
Canoe/Kayak	22	1.7%
Birding	22	1.7%
Other	21	1.6%
Hunt	16	1.3%
Boat	12	0.9%
Photography	11	0.9%
Swim	11	0.9%
Camp	9	0.7%
Sightsee	7	0.5%
Utilize Boat Landing	7	0.5%
Gathering edible plants	6	0.5%
Utilize playground equip	4	0.3%
Equestrian	4	0.3%
ORMV	4	0.3%
Ambiguity	7	0.5%

Figure 5. Prefered Trail Characteristics as well as prefered Trail and Non Trail expereiences.

Trail Characteristic		
Limestone / Gravel	144	21.80%
Connectors Interlinks	78	11.80%
Paved	76	11.50%
Wide	73	11.00%
Narrow/winding/single track	67	10.00%
Non-motorized	49	7.40%
Safe(r)Trails	27	4.00%
Two tack	17	2.50%
Groomed	16	2.40%
scenic	16	2.40%
More Access to Services/businesses	16	2.40%
Status Quo	13	1.90%
Status Quo	13	1.90%
Closer to home	11	1.60%
Not Sure	9	1.30%
Long Distance	8	1.20%
wooded	8	1.20%
Non-paved	6	0.90%
Dirt	4	0.60%
Smooth	3	0.40%
Packed	2	0.30%
one way	2	0.30%
Weight/size restrictions	1	0.10%

Non Trail Recreation Based		
Quiet Activities	38	48.10%
Nature Based activity	15	18.90%
Improve Boat Landings	7	8.80%
Fishing docks/Piers	6	7.50%
Birding	4	5.00%
Hunting	3	3.80%
more play equipment	2	2.50%
Enjoy Kayak/Canoeing	2	2.50%
Play equipment	1	1.20%
Restroom facilities	1	1.20%

Trails Recreation Activity based	
More ATV Trails	39
No ATV's	10
Enjoy ATV	73
Intensive use (ATV)	5
More Bike Trails	9
Enjoy Biking	67
More Snowmobile Trails	25
No Snowmobiling	2
Enjoy Snowmobiling	37
More Walking Hiking Running	5
Enjoy Walking Hiking/Running	71
More Horse Trails	2
No Horses	1
Multiple Use	31
Complementary Uses	4
Single use trails	4
Enjoy Skiing	14
Enjoy Snowshoeing	2
Enjoy Roller Blade	1
Family Activities	7
Nature Based activity (Solitude)	13
Quiet Activities	56
Healthy Activites	4

Figure 6. Improvements needed to Polk County Facilities and/or additional facilities needed

General Non Trail	
Stewardship	4
Bathrooms	2
Maintance	6
More Camp Grounds	1
Status Quo	75
Quieter Spaces	1
Promote Silent Sports	3
Safer Spaces	1
More Fishing Docks	1
Update Playground Equipm	1
Control Insects	2
More boat landings	1
Increase Access	2
Boat wash stations	1

Trail	
More ATV Trails	63
Less ATV Trails	14
More Snowmobile Trails	41
Less Snowmobile Trails	2
More Motorized trails	24
More Non-motorized trails	52
Connector Routes	23
More Multi Use	41
More Trails, General	22
Staus quo	43
Pavment	24

The intent of the public process was to gauge the public opinion of all Polk County facilities. The majority of responses concentrated on trial issues and accessibility. There were also numerous responses concerning parks, campsites, and boat ramps. The high or growing participation rates outlined by the 2017 Recreational Opportunity Analysis for the Great Northwest Region from WDNR were reinforced by the Polk County Survey results. The Polk County survey results showed a strong desire for facilities that promoted hiking, walking, running, biking, cross country skiing, snowmobiling and ATV usage.

The response numbers for other uses such as fishing, hunting, picnicking, canoeing, swimming, birding, and photography recreation were considerably lower than the response numbers associated with trail activities just mentioned. The survey results may have been impacted by the master plans associated with the Stower Seven Lakes Trail and the Cattail State Trails during the time of the Polk County Outdoor Recreational Plan survey. Polk County will have to continue balancing recreational amenities available today as well into the future for the diverse recreational experiences desired.

STATE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP)

Assessing the outdoor recreation needs of Wisconsin's residents and visitors is a major component of the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP). Outdoor recreation is a very broad concept. Activities range from shooting buckets to shooting bears, from just relaxing to rock climbing, or from solitary hiking to trekking at the State Fair. With many, often competing interests, it is necessary to assess the needs, plans, and issues involving outdoor recreation in the region.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources guidelines for outdoor recreation planning encourage local planning efforts to consider the needs, issues, and priorities identified in the SCORP. The 2019-2023 SCORP identified the following trends in Wisconsin outdoor recreation activities.

Table 18. Activity demand from the 2017 Recreational Opportunity Analysis (Statewide).

Increasing Demand	Adventure racing	Popular as both an individual and a group activity.
	Driving for pleasure	An easy activity for the aging baby boomer generation.
	Developed/RV camping	Baby boomers are a continued driving force for this growth.
	Kayaking	Cheaper entry points have attracted more participants.
	Visit a dog park	Urban residents continue to demand more of these areas.
	Soccer outdoors	Youth growth is still strong in urban areas.
	BMX biking	X Games popularity may be driving this growth.
	Climbing	Indoor climbing walls have led to an outdoor resurgence.
	Stand up paddling/paddleboarding	A fast growing water sport sweeping the country.
	Triathlon (on- and off-road)	Varying distance events have allowed for growth.
	Off-highway vehicle driving	Post recession growth continues.
	Gardening or landscaping for pleasure	The "grow local" concept is taking hold at many levels.
Stable Demand	Walk for pleasure	Market saturation does not allow for large growth.
	Running or jogging	Gen Y is replacing the baby boomers for this activity.
	Water parks	Recession may have caused this growth to slow.
	Motorboating	Still easy access in a water-based state.
	Day hiking	Popular with many generations.
	Golf	Time constraints do not allow for growth.
	Tent camping	Continues to be stable, but growth is illusive.
	Snowboarding	May have peaked after 20 years of growth.
	Trail running	A stable niche activity with Gen Y.
	View/photograph wildlife	An easy activity that spans generations.
	Bicycling (road and non-paved)	Popular with many generations – access is still key.
	Snowshoeing	After large growth, this has stabilized.
Decreasing Demand	Hunting	Continues to struggle with generational loss and private access.
	Inline skating	A large decrease in the last six years, the bottom may be near.
	Skateboarding/skate parks	Gen M is free-skating with longboards.
	Horseback riding on trails	Recession impacts have caused this to decrease with no rebound.
	Softball	Baby boomers continue to leave this sport.
	Downhill skiing	Gen Y does not have the numbers to replace aging baby boomers.

While by no means is this a complete analysis, these issues should foster future discussions between recreation providers about how to better serve various recreation interests. By identifying issues of statewide and regional significance, county and local outdoor recreation providers can better identify individual roles for providing high quality recreation resources, and for continually improving the recreational opportunities offered to our citizens, now and into the future.

Recreation Opportunity Analysis (ROA)
*Taken from the 2016 Wisconsin DNR Recreation Opportunity Analysis

Table 19. Recreational Activities with a **higher** participation rate in the Great Northwest Region compared to the state average.

- 4WD driving
- ATV/UTV riding
- Bird/wildlife watching
- Cross-country skiing/ snowshoeing
- Fishing – lake from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Fishing – ice fishing
- Harvesting berries/mushrooms, etc.
- Hunting – big game
- Hunting – migratory bird
- Hunting – small game
- Motorboating including pontoons
- Target shooting - firearms • Target shooting - archery
- Snowmobiling
- Trapping

Table 20. Recreational Activities with a **lower** participation rate in the Great Northwest Region compared to the state average.

- Swimming in community pools
- Visiting a dog park

Table 21. Future Recreational needs in the Great Northwest Region.

High	Medium	Low
ATV/UTV riding	Cross country skiing	Bicycling - fat tire/snow biking -winter
Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding	Dog walking	Dog sledding/skijoring
Bicycling - mountain biking/off-road biking	Fishing - ice fishing	Dog training
Bird or wildlife watching	Fishing - river fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak	Dog trialing
Camping - developed	Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	Geocaching
Camping - primitive	Horseback riding	Horse cart driving
Canoeing or kayaking	Hunting - migratory birds	Hunting - turkey
Fishing - lake fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak	Hunting - small game	Rock climbing
Fishing - lake fishing from shore or a pier	Nature photography	Sailing, windsurfing, rowing, stand-up paddling
Fishing - stream or river fishing from shore or wading	Participating in nature-based education programs	Scuba diving/snorkeling
Four-wheel vehicle driving	Picnicking	Target shooting - archery
Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking	Snowmobiling	Trapping
Hunting - big game	Snowshoeing	Whitewater rafting
Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)	Target shooting - firearms	
Off-highway motorcycle riding	Visiting a beach, beach walking	
Swimming in lakes and rivers		

SUMMARY OF THE GREAT NORTHWEST REGION ROA

With a diversity of public conservation lands, the Great Northwest Region has been an outdoor recreation destination, particularly for those in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area, dating back to Wisconsin's earliest days. Hosting a diverse set of long distance and loop trails, the region is hailed for its hiking, hunting, and motorized riding opportunities to escape into the wilderness. Although the region is rich in current opportunities, several needs were expressed by residents.

Topping the list of needs are: hiking, walking, and running trails bicycling trails, hunting, fishing, camping, boating, motorized recreation trails, and swimming.

XI.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

Implementation of plan recommendations will be contingent upon county priorities, feasibility, and available resources and opportunities (e.g., grants, partnerships, available land, and staff resources).

Capital improvements to parks/facility are the addition of labor and materials that improve the overall value and usefulness of that park/facility. Capital improvements are designed and funded individually through segregated County funds. Routine maintenance is considered the normal cycle of repair and upkeep for existing facilities. Routine maintenance does not appreciably increase the value or usefulness of the park/facility, and is traditionally funded through the Department's operations budget. Non-routine maintenance of park facilities, however, is usually considered a capital improvement item. For example, upgrading an outdoor restroom facility for universal access would qualify as a capital improvement, while repainting an outdoor lavatory would be considered routine maintenance.

The capital improvement framework for each facility is a combination of several types of projects. These projects are ranked according to their importance and priority in the overall development of the facility. Capital improvements are ranked as follows:

1. Improvements to existing facilities:
    a) To correct health and safety hazards
    b) To update deficient facilities
    c) To modernize adequate but outdated facilities
2. Installation of facilities as deemed necessary through citizen participation.
3. Development of new facilities as found necessary through comparison to park and recreation standards.

Significant Goals

The Parks department identified multiple projects and began implementing them. The most significant goals include:
-Leverage the County Parks, Forest and Natural Resources, to drive Tourism to the best extent possible.
-Partner with the Village of Dresser, Town of Osceola, The City of St. Croix Falls to work on a connection between the Gandy Dancer Recreational Trail and the Stower Seven Lakes Trail.
-Improvements to existing park and trail facilities within the County.
-Partner with the Town of Sterling, Wisconsin DNR, and other government entities to expand recreation opportunities within the Polk County Forest.
-Develop a pamphlet and update online resources associated with allowed uses including, ATV/UTV's, biking, hiking, walking and hunting
-Repair both the Kennedy Dam and Atlas Dam.
-Develop downloadable maps for smartphone tablet use.

In early October 2018 staff conducted a site assessment of recreational facilities throughout Polk County. Results of the site assessment are contained in this section. This assessment included an inventory and specific development, renovation, and improvement recommendations for the following Polk County's nine park facilities:

- Ahlgren Wildlife Preserve
- Apple River Park
- Atlas Park
- Balsam Branch Ski Area
- Black Brook Park
- D.D. Kennedy Environmental Area
- Lotus Park
- Sterling Trailhead
- Somers Lake

AHLGREN WILDLIFE PRESERVE

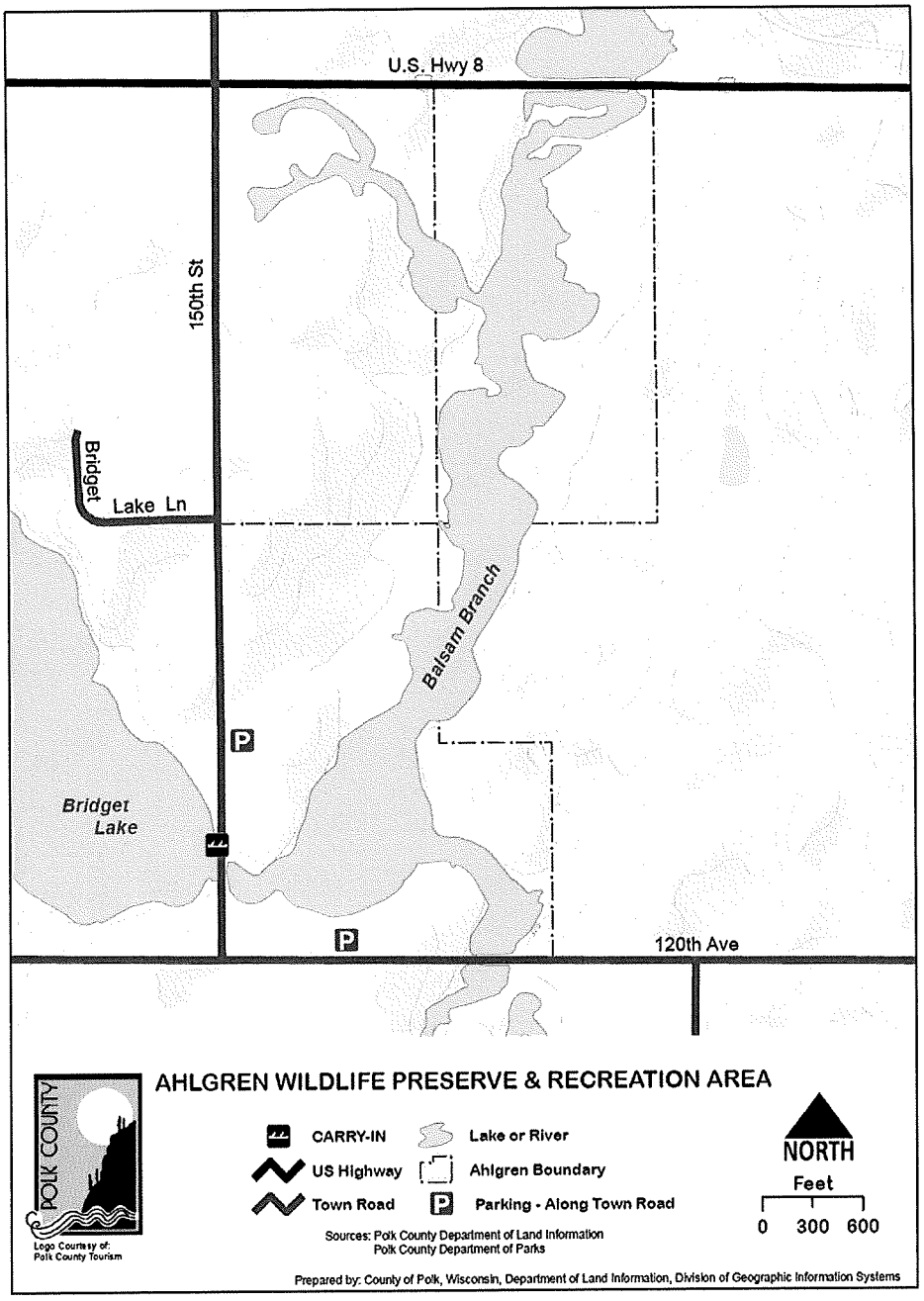
The Ahlgren Wildlife Preserve is a parcel of land set aside to preserve the forest, water, and wildlife. The Ahlgren family donated the 180 acre of land to Polk County in 2014. The Park Preserve is dedicated to the Ahlgren family, and to all of the others who have made Polk County and Wisconsin great. The Park is located three miles south of Balsam Lake, Highway 8 and East of 150 Street in the Balsam Lake Township. The 180 acres is to be managed for non-motorized recreational, forestry and educational purposes. An initial walking trail was constructed in 2017 as well as a parking lot on west side of the property along 150th street in 2016.

The Park is used primary as a walking and wildlife viewing area.

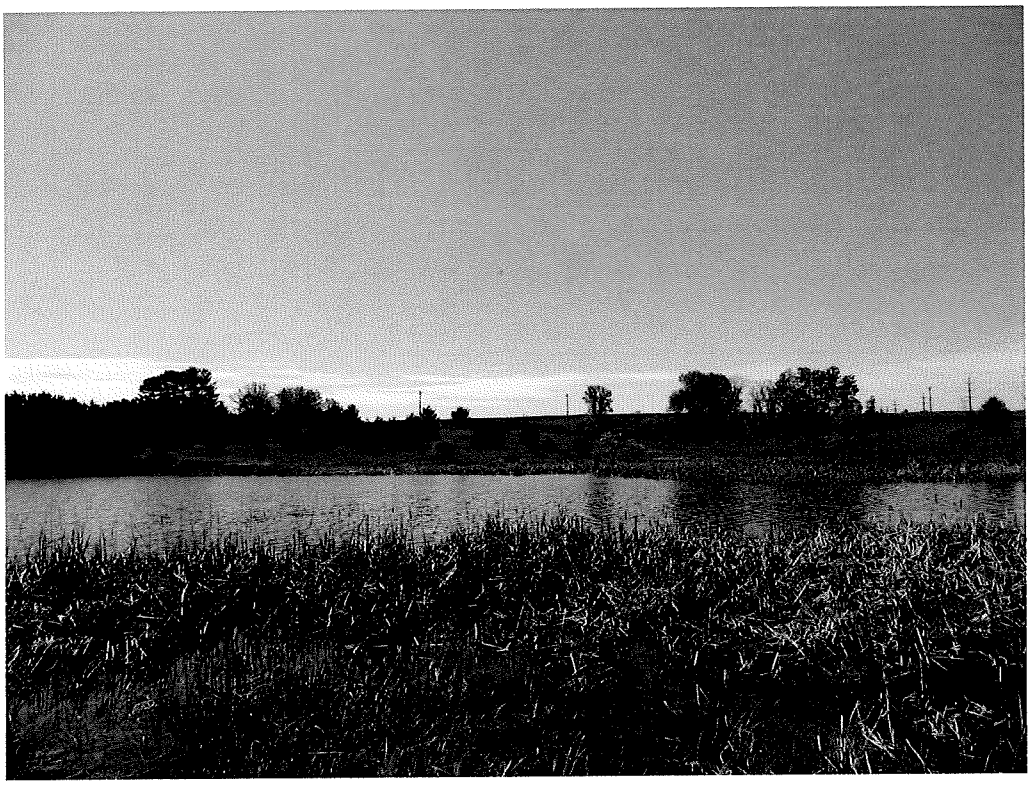
No gun hunting is allowed.

AHLGREN WILDLIFE PRESERVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AHLGREN WILDLIFE PRESERVE	COST ESTIMATE	Time Frame
Design and build Pavilion/Bathrooms	$17,000	2019
Plant vegetation for bird viewing	$1000	2020
Design and develop trail network	$5000	2020
Picnic Tables	1000	2020
Walking path to Connect to DD Kennedy Park	$1000	2020
Establish and sign Boundary	$5000	2024


U.S. Hwy 8
150th St
Bridget
Lake Ln
Balsam Branch
Bridget
Lake
120th Ave
AHLGREN WILDLIFE PRESERVE & RECREATION AREA
POLK COUNTY
Logo Courtesy of:
Polk County Tourism
CARRY-IN
US Highway
Town Road
Lake or River
Ahlgren Boundary
Parking - Along Town Road
NORTH
Feet
0 300 600
Sources: Polk County Department of Land Information
Polk County Department of Parks
Prepared by: County of Polk, Wisconsin, Department of Land Information, Division of Geographic Information Systems

AHLGREN WILDLIFE PRESERVE



Apple River Park

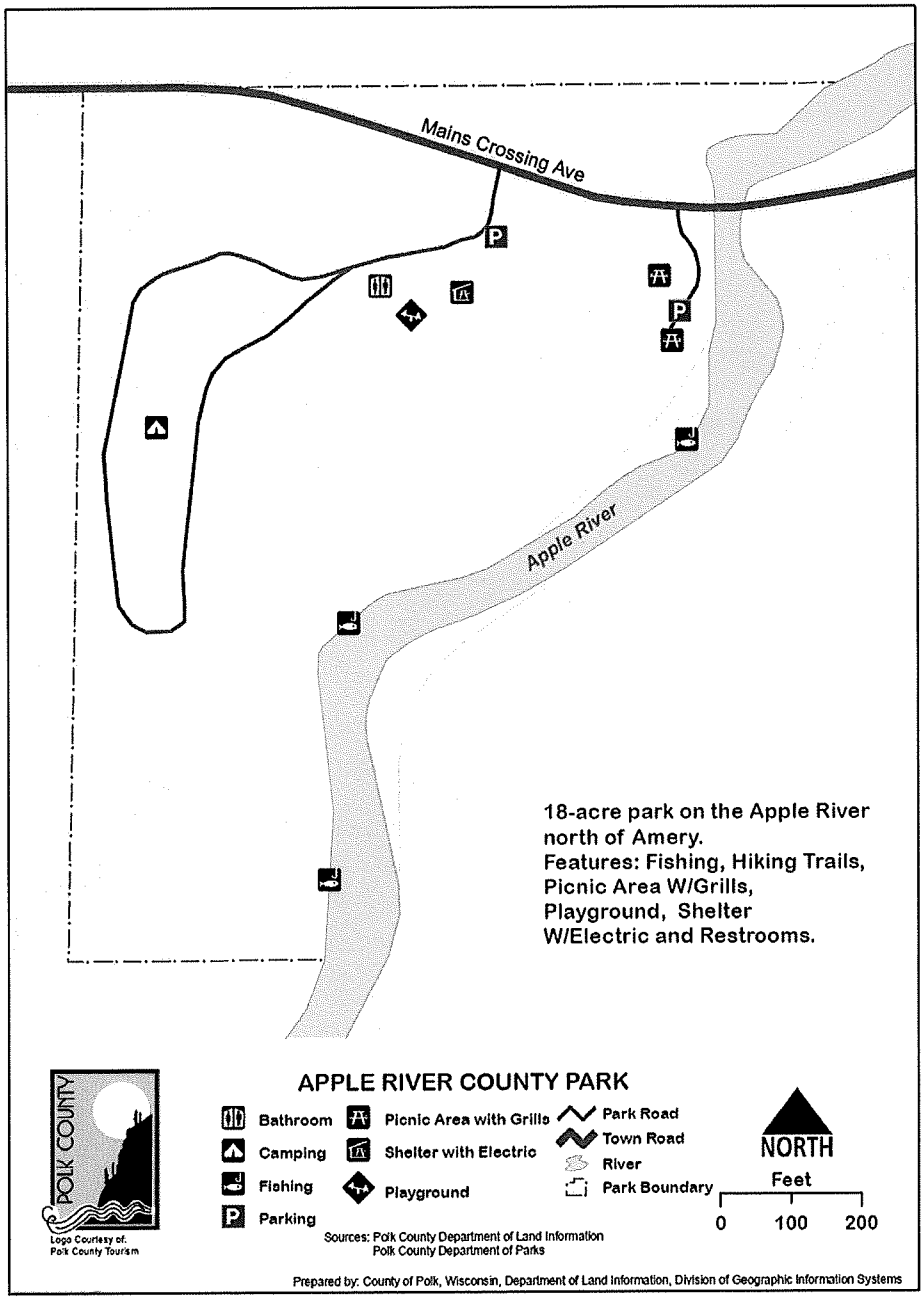
The Apple River Park is a 20 acre park located along the Apple River North of Amery in Apple River Township. Apple River is within the Polk County Forest and is classified as a special use property. Fifteen sites are available on a first come first serve basis. Five of the sites have electricity. A fee of $15 dollars per night is paid at a self-serve station. The campground is open Memorial Day to October 1st with restrooms and garbage pickup during this time frame. The park also has playground equipment and access to fishing. During the off season, the bathrooms are closed and no garbage collection is offered. In addition, a snowmobile trail runs through the park during winter months.

Allowed uses: Camping, Picnicking, Fishing, Walking, Hiking, Biking, And Swimming.

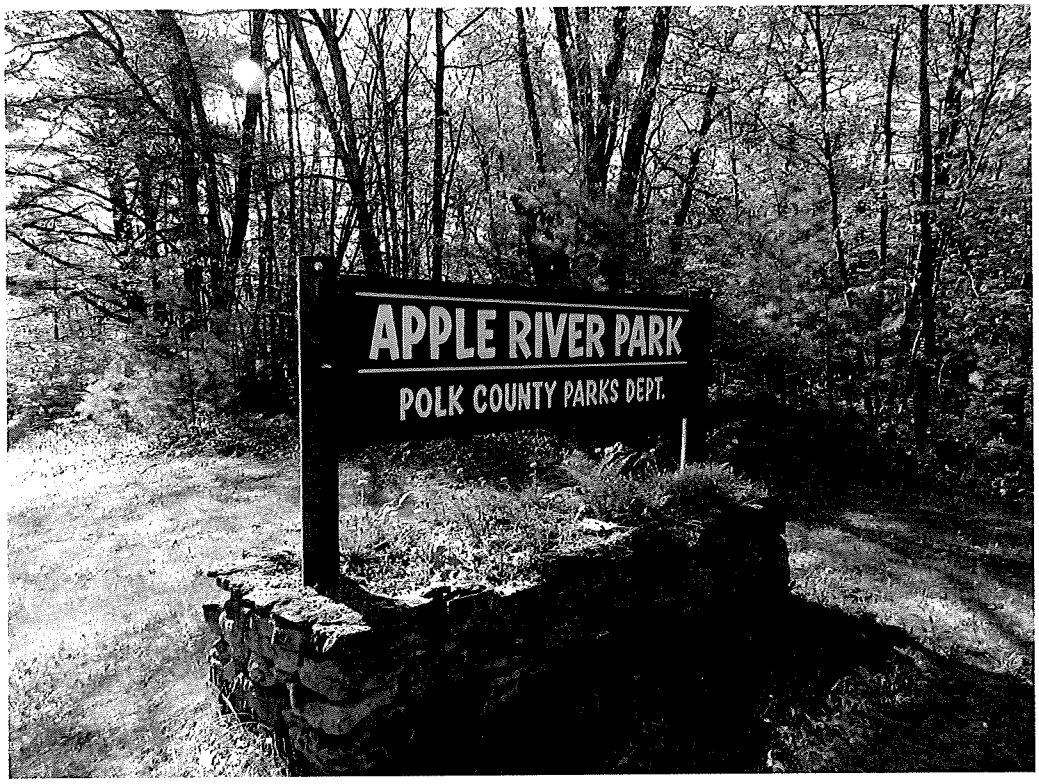
Non- allowed uses: ATV's Hunting, Trapping.

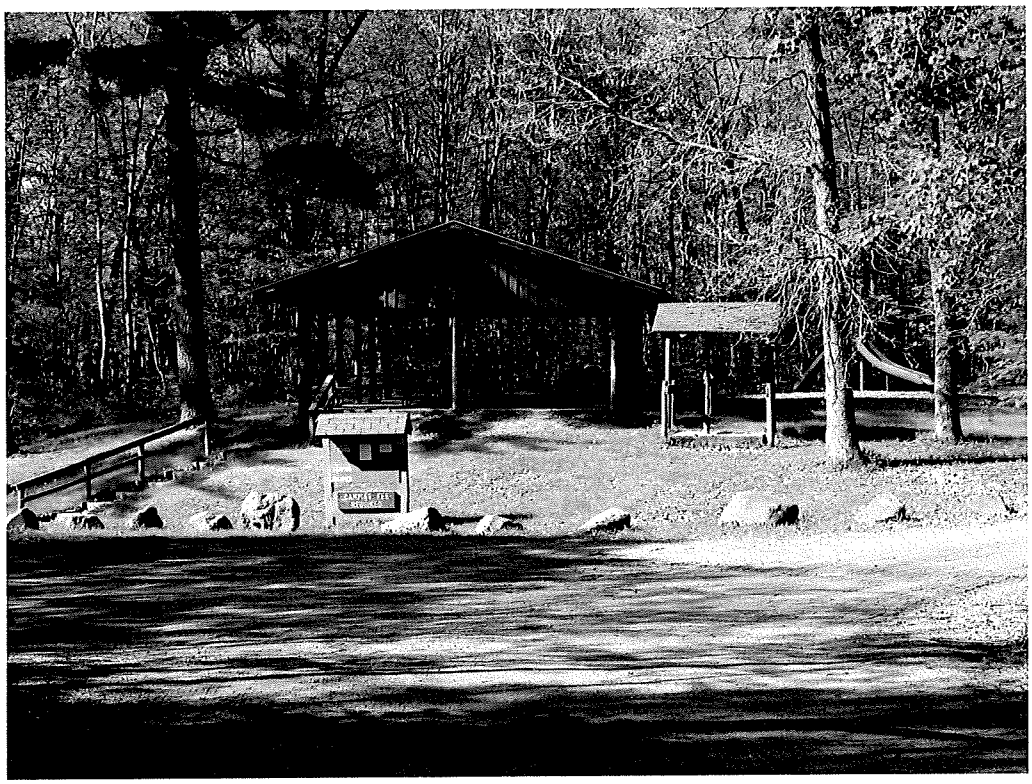
RECOMMENDATIONS APPLE RIVER PARK	COST ESTIMATE	Time Frame
Purchase 10 picnic tables	$4500	2019-2020
New 3-panel Kiosk	$750	2020
Utilize Campground Host	$500	Annually
Install One Way signs	$1000	2020
Purchase 10 Fire rings	$3000	2020
Reduce sites to 13 with 2 RV pads	$1000	2021
Replace Pavilion/ to Pavilion Warming area	$15,000	2021
Move to Online Registration	$5000	2022
Establish Boundary	$3000	2024
Install 2 Concrete pads for RV Camping	$5000	2024
Replace/Upgrade playground Equipment	$10,000	2024

APPLE RIVER PARK



APPLE RIVER PARK





APPLE RIVER PARK

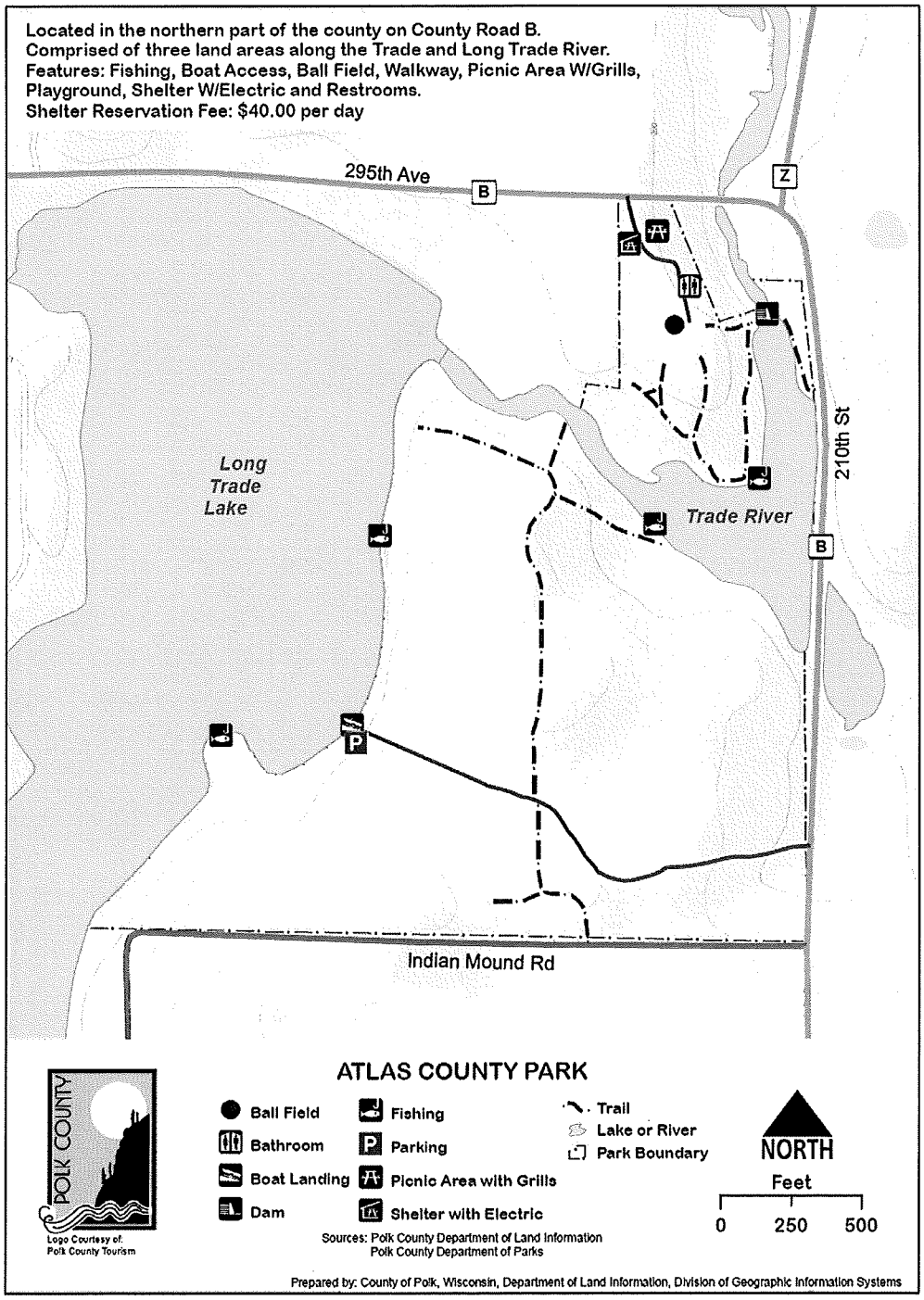
ATLAS PARK AND BOAT LANDING

Atlas Park is in the northern part of the county that is comprised of three land areas along the Trade River and Long Trade Lake. The park is 78 acres with a boat landing. The park contains 1 of two dams owned by the County. An engineering inspection conducted in 2015 indicated that the dam is in need of repair. The Park was acquired through land purchases beginning in the late 1960's and continuing through the 1970's. Polk County purchased the lands for "public use".

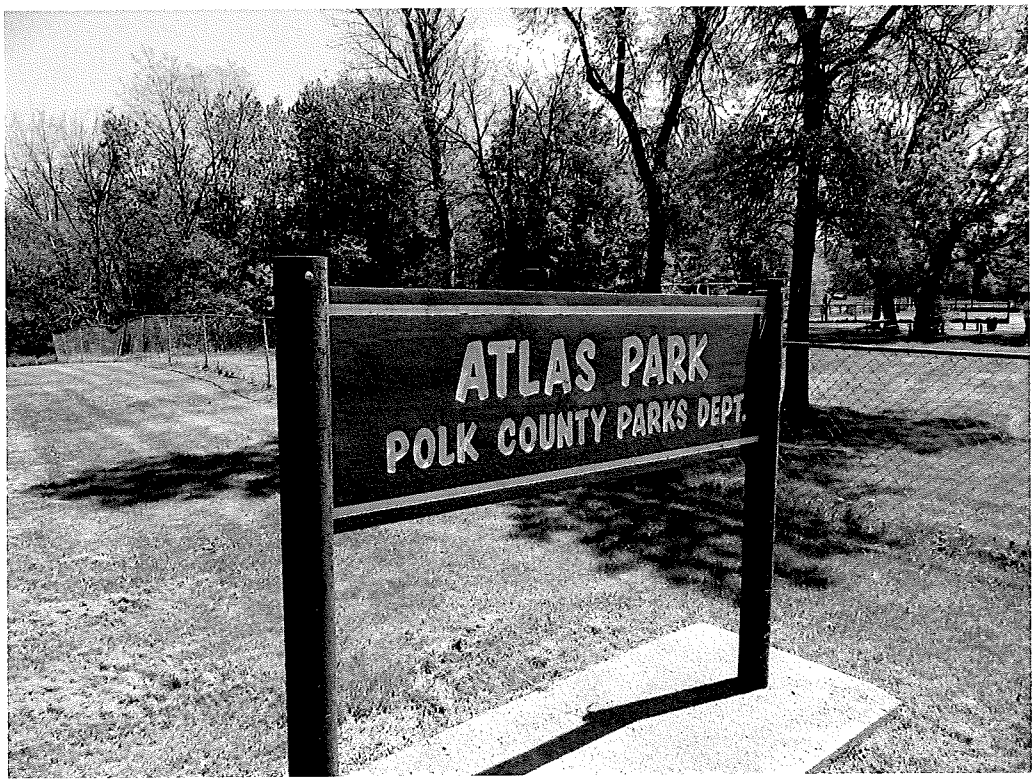
RECOMMENDATIONS ATLAS PARK & BOAT LANDING	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Replace Boat launch	$10,000	2020
Repair/decommission ball field benches/fence	$3000-$10,000	2020
Repair Dam	$50,000-$100,000	2020-2022
Improve Parking Lot (Make Larger)	$10,000	2021
Replace Decommission Play ground	$10,000	2022
Gravel Access Road	$5000	2024

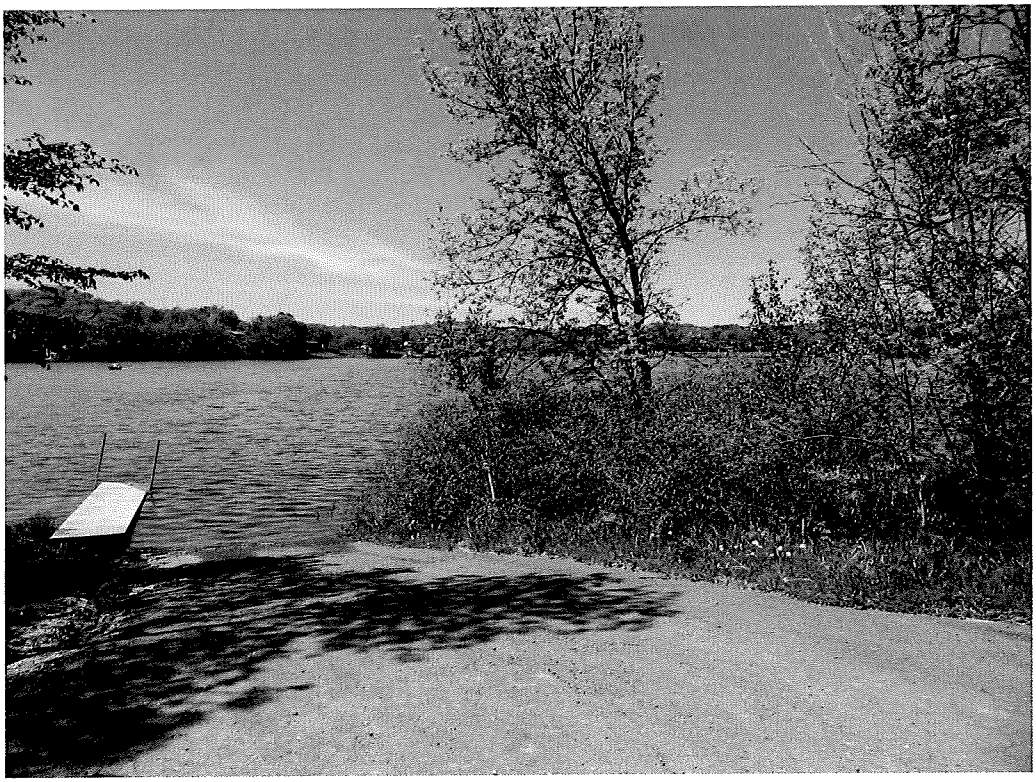
Non -Allowed: ATV's Hunting, Trapping

ATLAS PARK AND BOAT LANDING



ATLAS PARK AND BOAT LANDING





ATLAS PARK AND BOAT LANDING

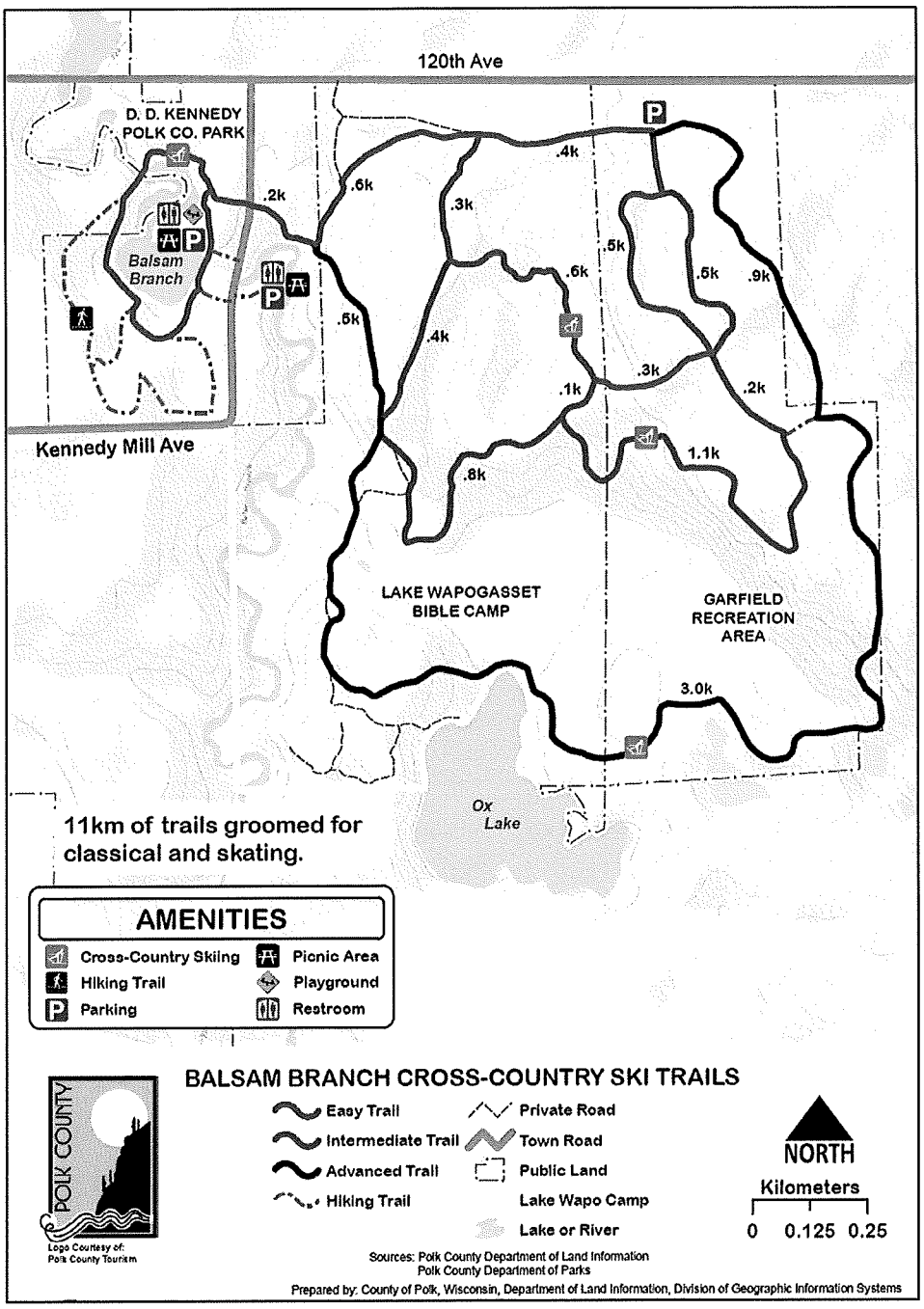
Balsam Branch Ski Trails (Non Polk County)

This area is located in Garfield Township approximately 7 minutes from Balsam Lake, 17 minutes from St Croix Falls and 19 minutes from Amery. 11-K of trails groomed, for both classical and skate skiing. Trails are open December 1st or latter depending on snow cover. The area does contain 4K of lighted trails. The ski trails are located on Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp, Garfield Township Lands and DD Kennedy Park.

RECOMMENDATIONS BALSAM BRANCH SKI AREA	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Renew Agreement with Amery Nordic Ski Club	$0	2019
New Snowmobiles	$10,000	2020
Install additional Lighting	$10,000	2024

Non Allowed Uses: Hunting, Trapping

BALSAM BRANCH SKI TRAILS



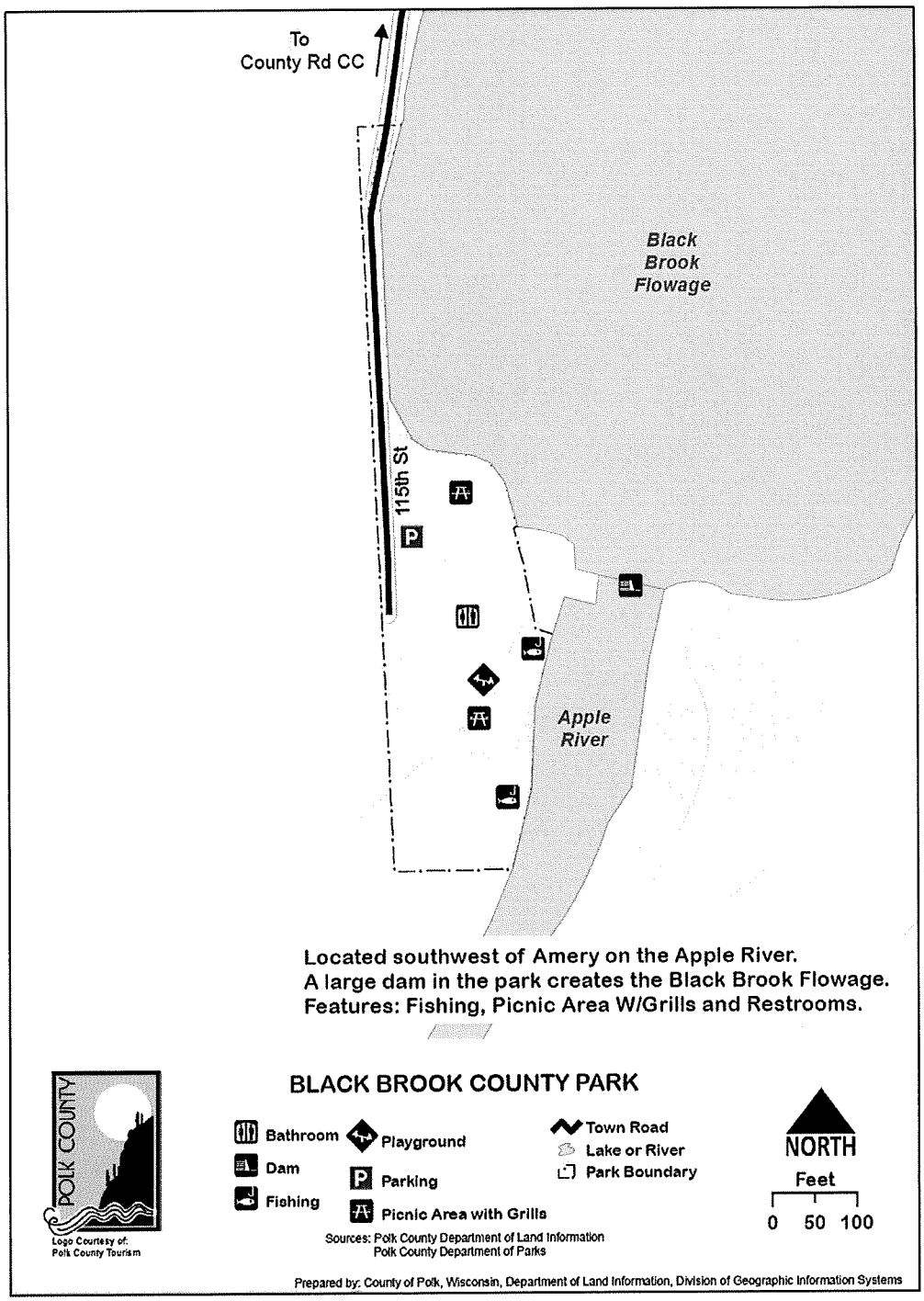
BLACK BROOK PARK

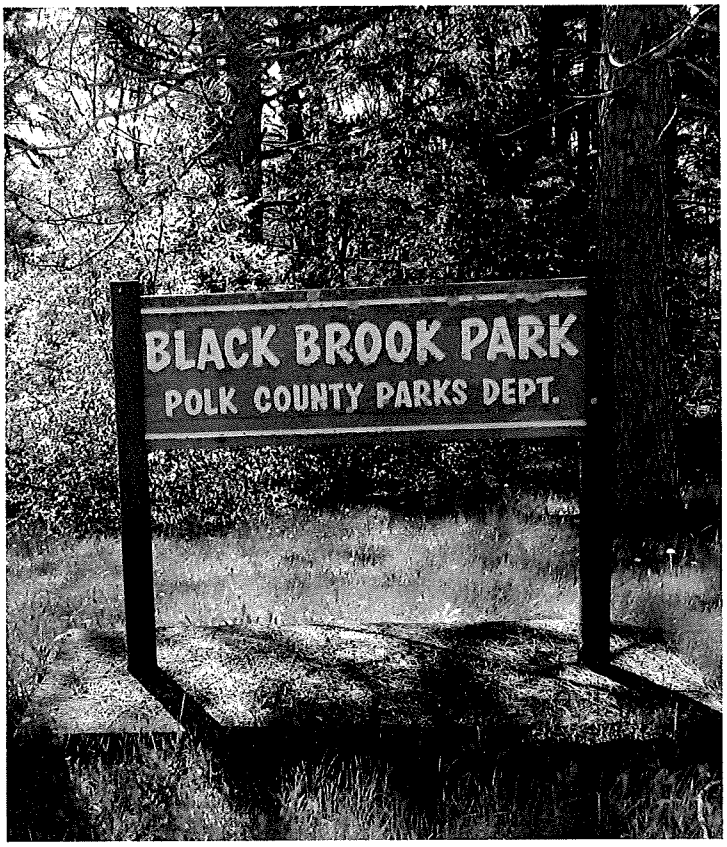
Located southwest of Amery on the Apple River. A large dam next to the park creates the Black Brook Flowage. Park includes a shelter, playground, vault toilets. The County maintains a boat landing near the park.

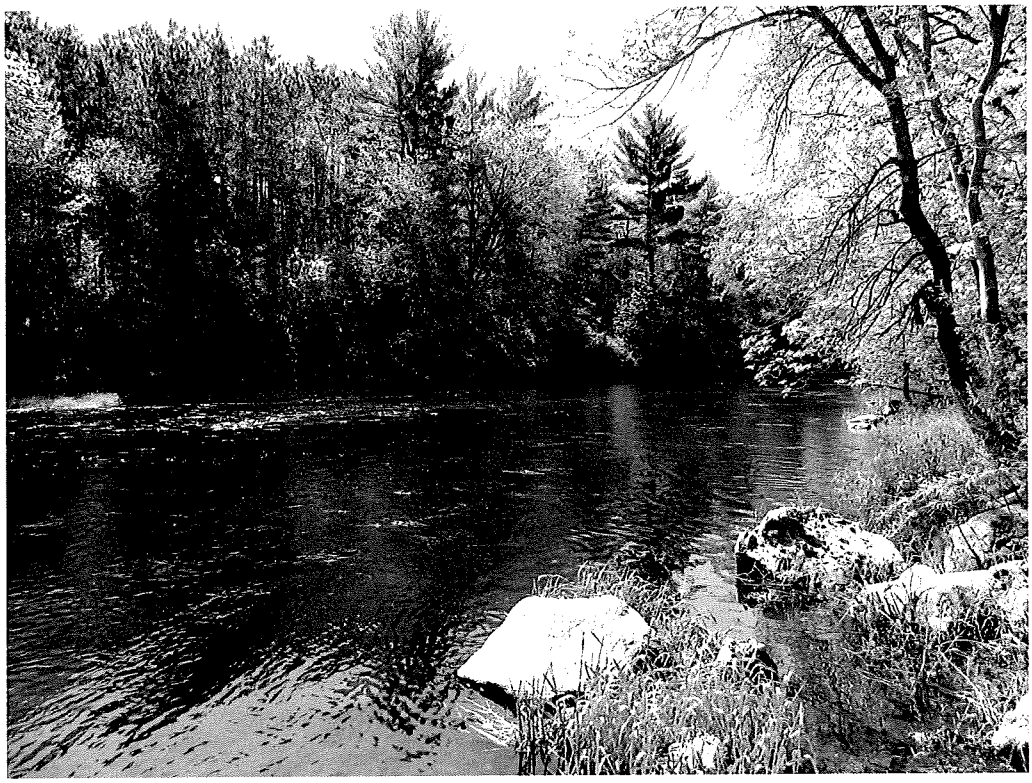
RECOMMENDATIONS BLACK BROOK	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Install erosion measures	$3,000	2019
Replace fishing dock	$5,000	2019-2020
Restore washout/ create access for fishing	$1000-$2000	2020-2021
Survey and identify boundaries	$5,000	2020
Level/Replace steps	$5,000	2021
Phase out/Replace playground equipment	$2,000-$20,000	2024

Non-allowed uses: ATV's, Hunting, Trapping.

BLACK BROOK PARK




BLACK BROOK PARK
POLK COUNTY PARKS DEPT.

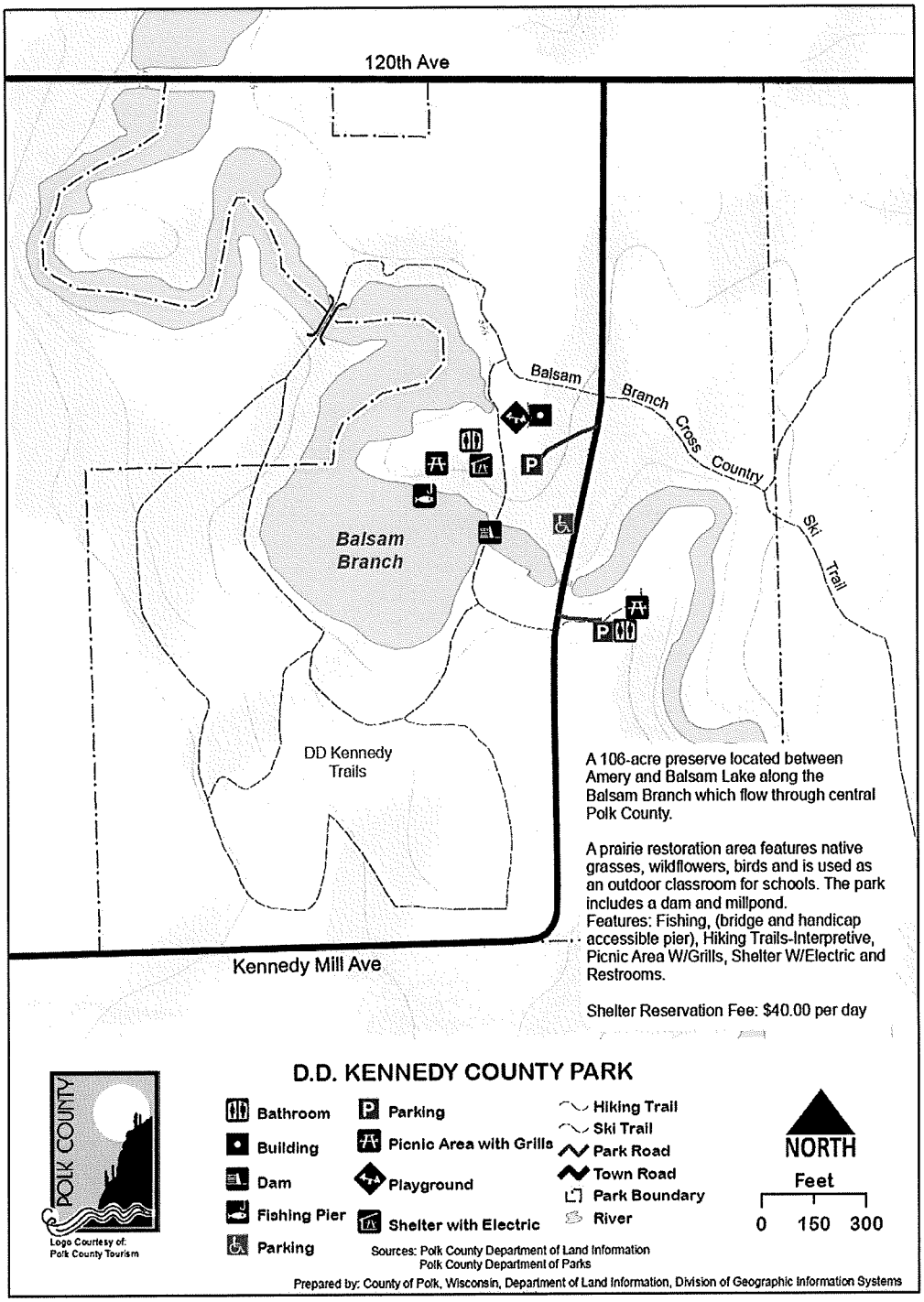


D.D. KENNEDY ENVIRONMENTAL AREA

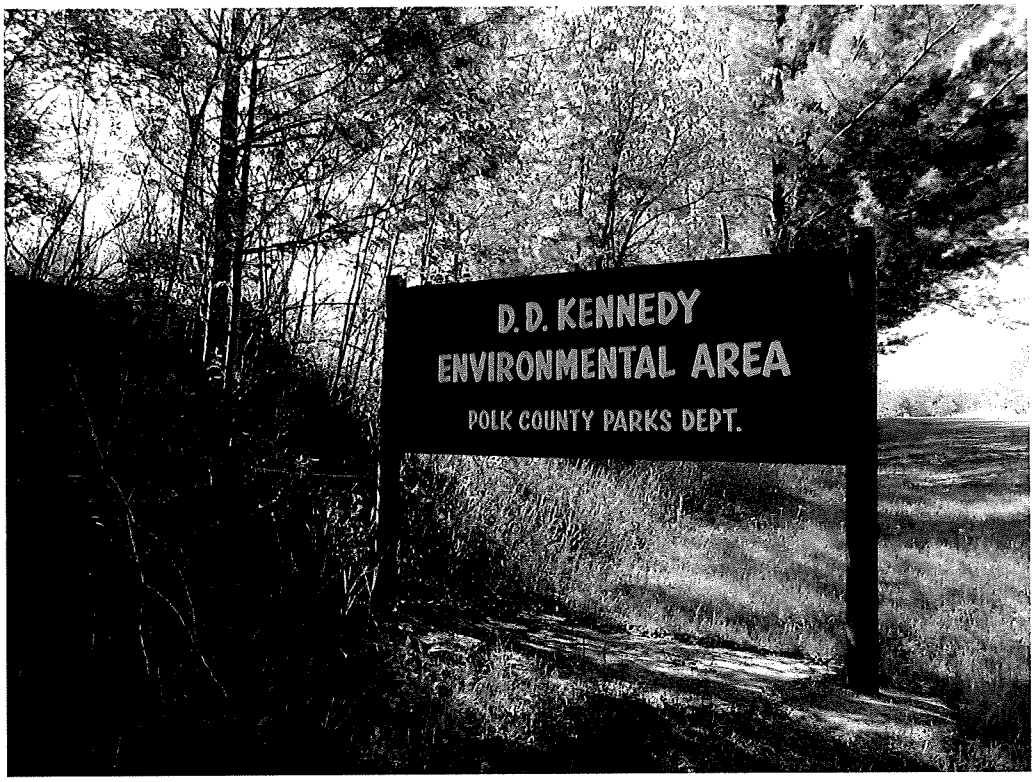
In 1973 Violet Kennedy donated the park area to Polk County in memory of her husband, a three term Assemblyman D.D. Kennedy. Violet said "I love the farm, and my husband loved this area and together we believed that with the river, it should be preserved for people who are interested in the outdoors." The property is 100 acres of woodland, open prairie and river bottom centrally located in Polk County. The park includes a prairie restoration area with interpretive hiking trails, wildflowers, birds a handicap accessible pier, picnic area playground, dam and millpond. The Education Building is available to rent for $100 per day plus a refundable deposit of $150. The building holds about 30 people and includes 8 tables 48 folding chairs and 3 benches. The playground equipment installed is considered rustic. Any additional playground added or replaced must remain "rustic".

RECOMMENDATIONS KENNEDY PARK	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Redesign and resurface entryway	$7,500	2019-2020
New 3-panel Kiosks (2)	$2,000	2020
Repair Dam embankment	$70,000	2019-2020
Fix /Replace Walking Bridge	$5000-$30,000	2019-2022
Repave/Repair trail network	$10,000-25,000	2020-2021
Resurface Limestone Trails	$10,000	2021
Decommission East bathrooms	$6000-$20,000	2021
Update/Replace Playground Equipment	$25,000	2022
Replace boards on fishing pier	$7000	2024
Develop the East side of the Park	$20,000	2024
Install new roof on pavilion	$8,000	2024

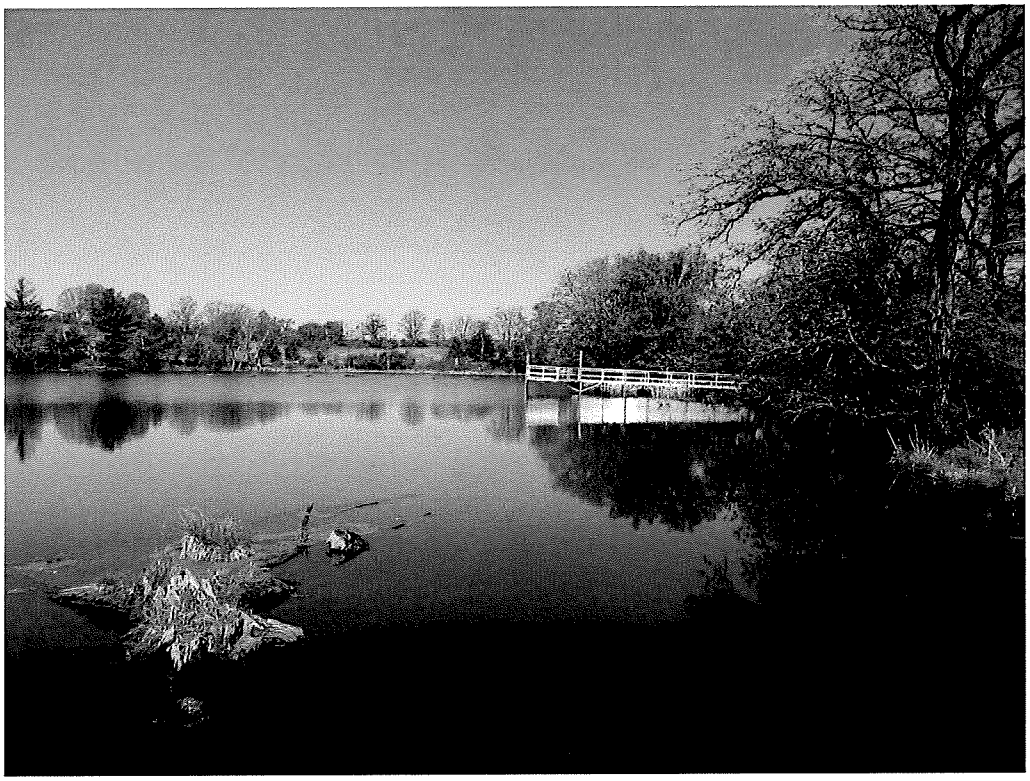
Non -allowed uses: Hunting, Trapping.


120th Ave
Balsam Branch Cross Country Ski Trail
Balsam Branch
DD Kennedy Trails
Kennedy Mill Ave
A 106-acre preserve located between Amery and Balsam Lake along the Balsam Branch which flow through central Polk County.
A prairie restoration area features native grasses, wildflowers, birds and is used as an outdoor classroom for schools. The park includes a dam and millpond.
Features: Fishing, (bridge and handicap accessible pier), Hiking Trails-Interpretive, Picnic Area W/Grills, Shelter W/Electric and Restrooms.
Shelter Reservation Fee: $40.00 per day
D.D. KENNEDY COUNTY PARK
POLK COUNTY
Logo Courtesy of: Polk County Tourism
Bathroom
Building
Dam
Fishing Pier
Parking
Parking
Picnic Area with Grills
Playground
Shelter with Electric
Hiking Trail
Ski Trail
Park Road
Town Road
Park Boundary
River
NORTH
Feet
0 150 300
Sources: Polk County Department of Land Information
Polk County Department of Parks
Prepared by: County of Polk, Wisconsin, Department of Land Information, Division of Geographic Information Systems

D.D. KENNEDY ENVIRONMENTAL AREA



D.D. KENNEDY ENVIRONMENTAL AREA



D.D. KENNEDY ENVIRONMENTAL AREA

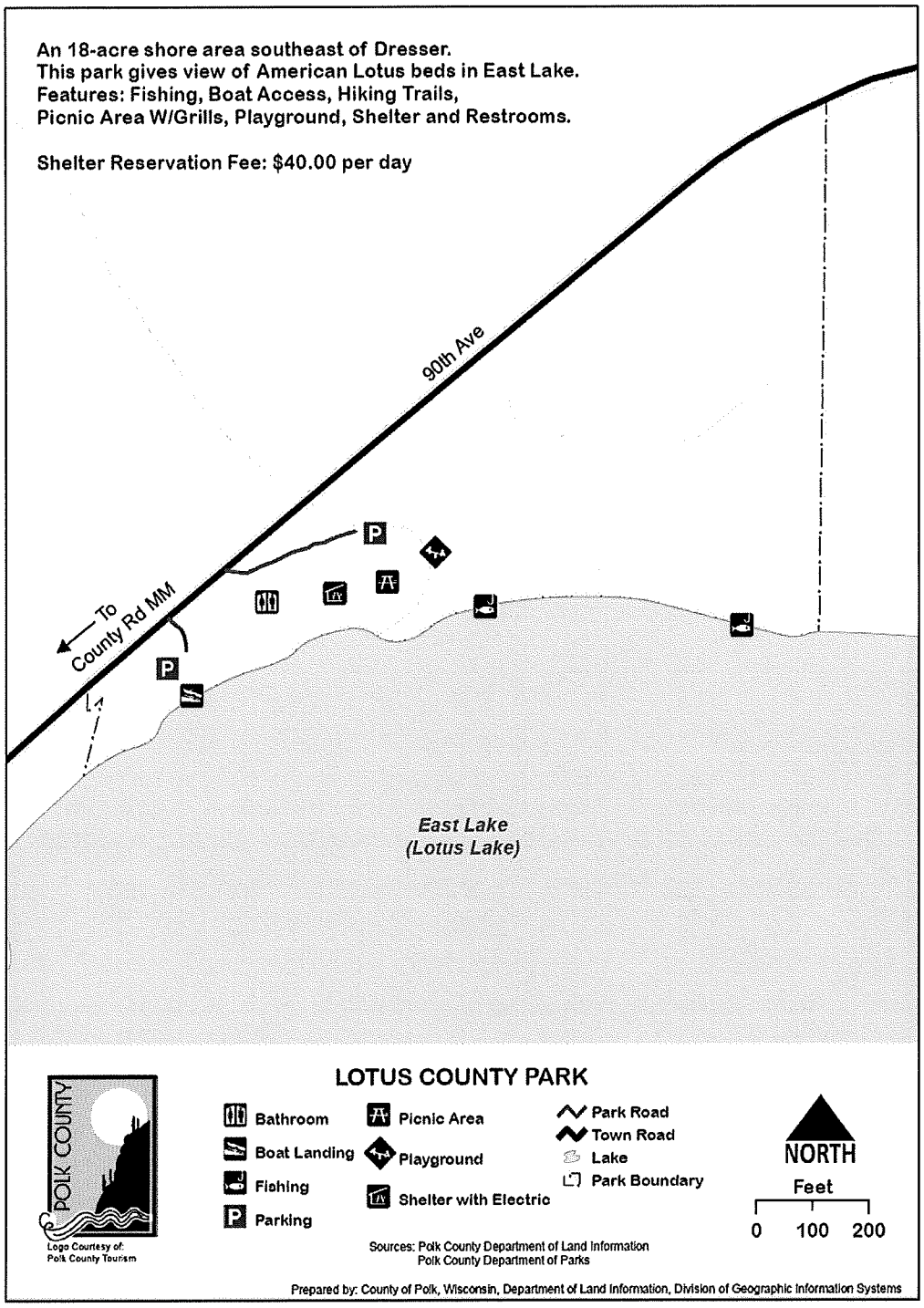
LOTUS LAKE PARK AND BOAT LANDING

A 14-acre park located along the northwest shore of Lotus Lake. This park gives view of American Lotus beds in the lake. Located 9 miles east of Osceola off County Rd M. Park includes a shelter, playground, vault toilets, and a boat landing.

RECOMMENDATIONS LOTUS LAKE PARK & BOAT LANDING	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
New 3-panel Kiosk	$750	2020
Expand trail network	$1,500	2020
Improve access to Stower Trail	$15,000	2021
Tree Removal	$5000	2020-2022

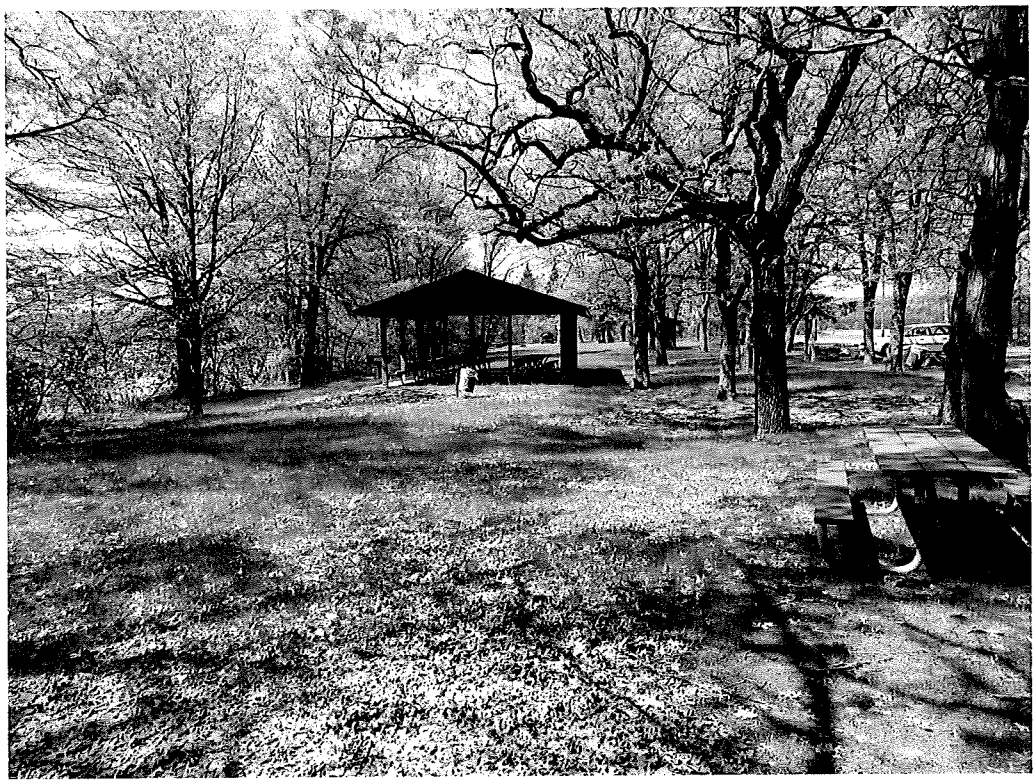
Non allowed Uses: Hunting, Trapping

LOTUS LAKE PARK AND BOAT LANDING



LOTUS LAKE PARK
POLK COUNTY PARKS DEPT.

LOTUS LAKE PARK AND BOAT LANDING



MAKIE LAKE

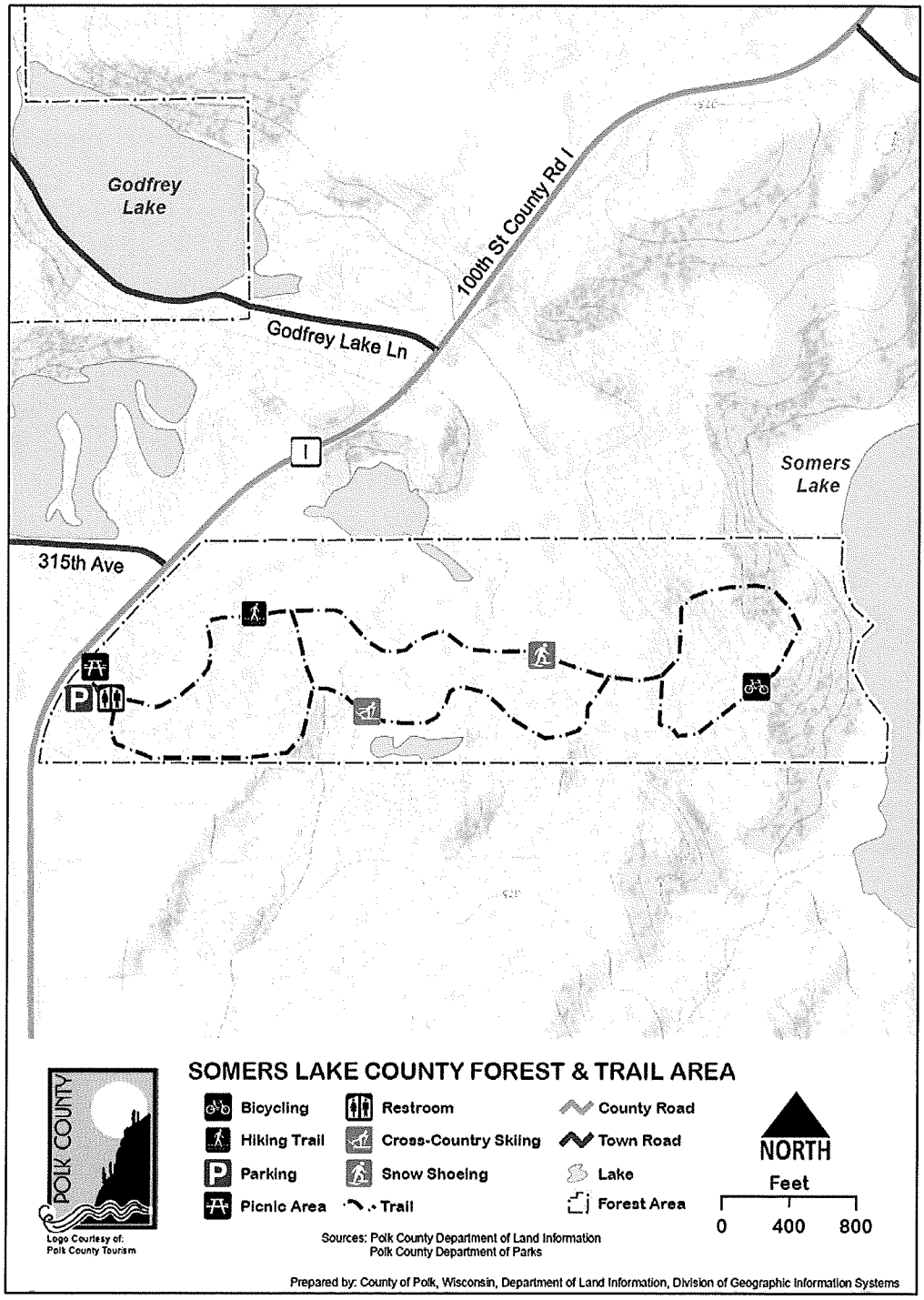
Mackie Lake is a 160 acres parcel of property that was acquired in 2003 from an interest free loan and entered into the County Forest. Located in McKinley Township, the property contains a 34 acre lake with a maximum depth of five feet. This property can be accessed by way of County Road O and East on 285th Avenue. The Clam River, which is a class 1 trout stream, flows from the lake downstream. An unimproved road leads to the property. This property is surrounded by hundreds of acres of County Forest. Currently this area is suited for low impact recreation such as hunting, canoeing, hiking, snowshoeing, fishing, nature study, and wildlife watching. This area contains a parking area and small watercraft launch area. The original agreement associated with the interest free loan stipulated this 160 acre property remain undeveloped.

SOMERS LAKE TRAIL

Sommers Lake trail is located in the Northern part of the County in Clam Falls Township along the West shore of Sommers Lake and East of County Road I. This property is enrolled in the County Forest system and the oak and hardwood timber types are managed by periodic thinning. The property also contains a parking area, picnic area, a restroom and developed recreational trail. Currently, non- groomed cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, and hunting are allowed on the property.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOMERS LAKE	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Develop Park Fat bike usage	$5,000	2022
Trail signs	$3,000	2022
Improve Parking Area	$5,000	2022

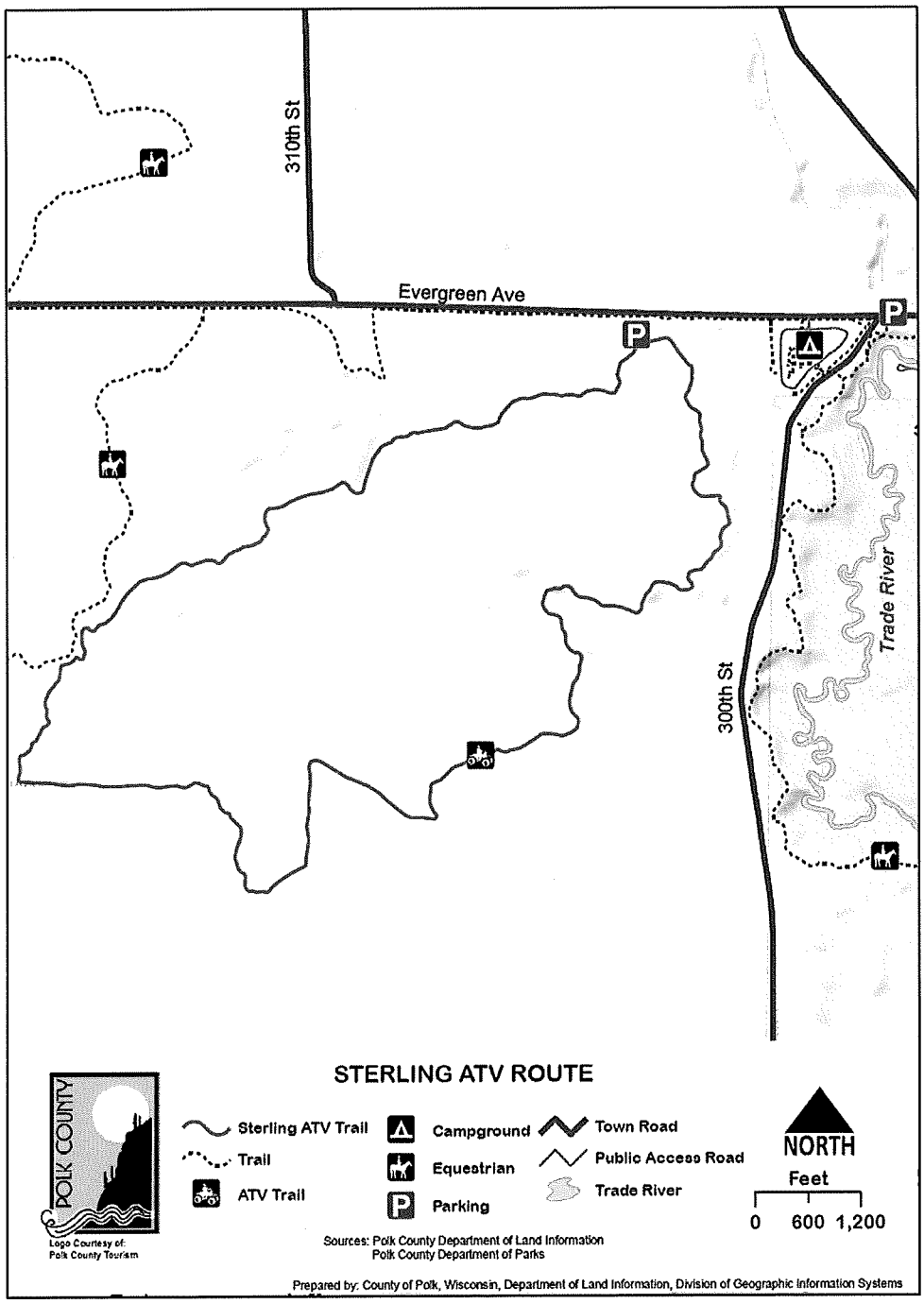
SOMERS LAKE TRAIL



SOMERS LAKE
RECREATION AREA
POLK COUNTY PARKS DEPT.

STERLING ATV TRAILHEAD

The sterling ATV Loop and trail head was constructed in 2012-2013 with State ATV grants fund. The trail head consist of a parking area, a picnic area, and a 6 mile ATV closed loop trail. The area serves as an access point to all the ATV Trails open within the Town of Sterling. This is the only area, at least at the time this plan, is open to ATV's within the County Forest.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STERLING ATV TRAIL	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
One-directional road signage	$350	2020
Surface parking lot	$10,000	2020
Install Vault Toilet	$10,000	2022
Develop Intensive Use area	20,000	2024

STERLING ATV TRAILHEAD

County Operated Boat Landings Not Associated with a Park

Polk County Parks operates a total of eight boat landings, four of these are not associated with a Park or County Forest. Periodic maintenance needs to be performed on the boat landings, parking lots and docks. The five boat landings not associated with a park include Staples, Mirror, Little Butternut, North White Ash, and Magnor Lake.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-PARK BOAT LANDINGS	COST ESTIMATE	TIME FRAME
Magnor Lake (Repair boat launch)	$15,000	2020
Magnor Lake Install light Pole	$2000	2020
Magnor Lake Install Vault Toilet	$10,000	2022
Magnor Lake Gravel Parking lot	$4000	2020
Little Butternut Gravel Parking lot	$4000	2021
Little Butternut Install New Dock	$5000	2021
North White Ash Install Dock	$5000	2021

County Facility Accomplishments

The following is a list of projects that were implemented from previous Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plans:

APPLE RIVER PARK

Project:	**Date Completed**
Four New Picnic tables	2019
Installed new stairs	2019
Repair service road to campsites	2011
Renovate camp sites with five (5) electrical hook-ups	2012
Updated playground equipment (new slide)	2012

ATLAS PARK AND BOAT LANDING

Project:	**Date Completed**
New Boat dock	2019
Expand Trail Network	2006
Prairie Signage	2006
New Restrooms	2018
Gravel Access	2017

Alhgren Park	**Date Completed**
Project:	
Initial walking trails	2016

BALSAM BRANCH SKI TRAILS

Project:	**Date Completed**
Lighting	2011
New Kiosk	2013

BLACK BROOK PARK

Project:	**Date Completed**
Brush Clearing	2013
Floating dock	2019

D.D. KENNEDY ENVIRONMENTAL AREA

Project:	**Date Completed**
Repaired Dam earth embankment	2019
Decommissioned East Bathrooms	2019
New fishing dock	2005
Painted restrooms	2012

LOTUS LAKE PARK AND BOAT LANDING

Project:	**Date Completed**
Replaced playground equipment (new slide)	2012
New roof on pavilion	2013
New restrooms	2014

Magnor Lake

Project:	**Date Completed**
Installed Handicapped Fishing Pier	2019

SOMERS LAKE TRAIL

Project:	**Date Completed**
Restoration of trail network	2007

STERLING ATV TRAILHEAD

Project:	**Date Completed**
Trail restoration	2014

Funding

The Polk County Outdoor Recreational Plan serves as guiding document for the County Forestry and Parks Department when developing its annual budget and for Capital Improvement Planning. Whenever applicable, Polk County will apply for grants to financially subsidize projects and recommendations listed in the Outdoor Recreational Plan. Below is a list of Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs Administered by the WDNR that Polk County will consider:

- ***Acquisition and Development of Local Parks***
- ***ATV/UTV Trails***
- ***ATV/Boat/Snowmobile/Enforcement Patrol***
- ***County Conservation Aids***
- ***Friends of State Lands***
- ***Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance***
- ***Friends of State Lands***
- ***Programs: Acquisition and Development of Local Park***
- ***Programs: Urban Green Space***
- ***Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)***
- ***Recreational Trails Program***
- ***Snowmobile Trail Aids***
- ***Sport Fish Restoration***
- ***Municipal Dam Grant Program***
- ***Polk County Parks will explore additional grant opportunities***