



**Comprehensive Outdoor  
Recreation Plan 2007 – 2011**

*Executive Summary*

PORTAGE COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN  
2007-2011 UPDATE

*Adopted By:*

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*Prepared Under the Direction of:*

Portage County Park Commission

William Peterson, President  
James Gifford  
Perry Pazdernik  
Jerry Piesik  
Mary Devine-Giese, Citizen, Secretary  
Dan Trainer, Citizen, Vice President  
Michael Zdroik, Citizen

Portage County Parks Department

Gary L. Speckmann, Park Director

*Prepared With the Assistance of:*

Portage County Planning and Zoning Department

Stephen Brazzale, Director  
Jeff Schuler, Senior Planner  
Jeff Hartman, GIS LIS Manager  
Rod Sutter, GIS Technician

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## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

Parks have become an integral part of our lifestyles. These areas provide many benefits to a great cross-section of County residents. Children learn to interact and play with other children, teens enjoy having a place to play and hang out with one another, and parents and seniors enjoy taking part in family activities. Even dogs have a special park for them. Outdoor recreation is a major component of the high quality of life enjoyed by those that live in, or visit, Portage County.

The State of Wisconsin has established a continuing program to financially assist State and local outdoor recreation programs. Section 23.30 of the Wisconsin State Statutes establishes the Outdoor Recreational Program, the purpose of which is 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 recreational facilities and services...and to facilitate and encourage the fullest beneficial public use of these areas”

This document provides a database and recommendations which may be utilized by community officials, staff, and residents of Portage County to understand and promote comprehensive outdoor recreation planning. It is intended to serve as a policy document of the County Park Commission, the County Planning and Zoning Committee and the County Board of Supervisors. Non-profit groups, foundations, and the general public may also use this document to coordinate their own private efforts for developing outdoor recreation facilities.

### **PORTAGE COUNTY PARK COMMISSION**

The Portage County Board of Supervisors established the Park Commission in 1935, under Chapter 27.02 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. The seven members Commission consists of four (4) County Board Supervisors, whose term is subject to re-election every two years, and three (3) citizen members who serve seven year terms. The Commission discharges those responsibilities granted under Chapter 27.05.

The mission of the Portage County Park Commission is to enhance and maintain the quality of life for Portage County citizens by providing a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities such as biking, birding, fishing, skiing, viewing, swimming, etc., in natural settings throughout County Park facilities and programs.

### **PAST PLANNING**

Portage County developed its first outdoor recreation policy manual in 1966. That manual and a subsequent 1969 update were written for the purpose of meeting the County recreation demands and qualifying for State and Federal recreation aids. The policy manual was expanded and reworked to create the first Portage County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP), which was adopted in 1971.

Since the adoption of the 1971 CORP, the Portage County Park Commission has adopted plan updates in 1977, 1985, 1990, 1995, and 2001. These 5-year Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan updates were undertaken to adjust policies and acquisition/improvement priorities as needed, and to continue State and/or Federal funding eligibility.

## **CURRENT PLANNING PROCESS**

The 2007-2011 update of the County's Outdoor Recreation Plan was initiated by the County Parks Director in the summer of 2006. Consistent with past practice, the Parks Department requested the assistance of the Planning and Zoning Department in drafting the document. A draft of the Plan was completed by February 2007 and forwarded to the Planning and Zoning Committee and Park Commission for review and public hearing.

Included in this document are a detailed inventory of existing facilities and an analysis of how local conditions affect recreational needs throughout the County. This Outdoor Recreation Plan is short-range in scope, addressing a 5 year planning period from 2007-2011. As previously stated, this is the sixth in a series of updates to the County's original outdoor recreation plan. The continual update of this Plan serves to facilitate evaluation of current recreation capabilities and needs while maintaining the County's eligibility for various State and federal outdoor recreation grant programs. The Portage County Park Commission shall continually review and update this Plan in light of changing conditions and needs, with possible input from the County Planning and Zoning Committee. Amendments shall follow the same process as the original Plan including: a public meeting(s)/hearing on the proposed amendment(s); approval by the County Planning and Zoning Committee and County Park Commission; and adoption by the County Board.

## **SECTION 4 COUNTYWIDE RECREATION GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **OUTDOOR RECREATION GOALS**

Two principal goals are herein identified for the 2007-2011 planning period:

- Goal 1 Provide a Countywide park and recreation system which meets the outdoor recreation needs of County residents, as well as preserving and protecting areas of beauty in natural settings, in both an economic and environmentally sensitive manner.
- Goal 2 Make Portage County and participating municipalities eligible for continued participation in the Wisconsin Stewardship Program, other recreational grants administered by the WisDNR and any future outdoor recreational grant programs, which require an approved comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. A description of the various State grant programs relating to recreation is included in Appendix A of this report.

### **OUTDOOR RECREATION POLICIES**

Six principal policies are herein identified for the 2007-2011 planning period:

- Policy 1 Protect and conserve natural resources which provide special opportunities for outdoor recreation by: purchasing lands with unique features or in strategic locations; supporting the use of protective zoning, e.g. Conservancy Zoning, on environmentally sensitive lands, both public and private; supporting environmental education programs; and carefully managing existing parks and facilities to avoid deterioration, overcrowding, and loss of aesthetic values.
- Policy 2 Provide a broad variety of park and recreation facilities and programs including: active and passive recreation; multi-season outdoor uses; multiple use activities; facilities which are accessible to all, including youth, elderly, and handicapped persons; and facilities which are open to all people regardless of race, color, or creed.
- Policy 3 Encourage cooperation and coordination among local units of government in developing park or recreation facilities, in order to avoid duplication of efforts. Consider the development of joint recreation facilities in or near urban areas.
- Policy 4 In addition to the 5 year programs included in the County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, develop and consider a longer range planning program to address the County's future outdoor recreation needs.
- Policy 5 Actively seek funding sources to supplement the County's recreation budget in order to maintain a high quality park and recreation system. This includes maintaining eligibility for various federal and state recreation grant-in-aid programs and actively seeking such monies as a principal method of implementing necessary park projects.
- Policy 6 Actively seek public input in the planning and design of major outdoor recreation projects.

## **SECTION 5            COUNTYWIDE RECREATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, 2007-2011**

The following improvement program deals with general recommendations for improving the quality of recreational experiences and specific proposals concerning acquisition and development projects. It should be understood that acceptance of these proposals and recommendations does not mean that this plan is final, absolute, or binding. This plan should be revised, as needed, in order to maintain its usefulness as an up-to-date working tool.

This program addresses the needs and demands of outdoor recreation. It is acknowledged that there are other County recreational needs and demands which are typically satisfied in an indoor setting. Public planning for recreation is generally limited to outdoor activities because of the statutory responsibilities of the Park Commission and County Board. Therefore, indoor recreation activities, for the purpose of this plan, are assumed to fall primarily within the jurisdiction of private enterprise or semi-public institutions.

This five year program of acquisition and development of parklands is based, in part, upon the user trends and needs identified in this Plan. Phasing of the major projects, especially acquisition, will depend upon many factors, some of which are not controlled by the Park Commission. Project priorities will be dependent on the availability of funds, as well as the availability of lands which have been identified as being desirable for park expansion.

Existing facilities will be upgraded on a regular, yearly schedule. These projects include improvement of swimming beaches, water quality improvement projects, additional picnic facilities and minor expansion of active play facilities.

The purpose of the following acquisition projects is to: 1) respond to overcrowding or other problems with existing facilities, 2) provide new or expanded facilities where needed and 3) improve the overall quality of the County park and recreation system.

### **ACQUISITION PROJECTS**

#### **Collins Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Protect and improve quality by purchasing additional lands to reduce nutrient enrichment, expand existing facilities and preserve open space.
- ❖ Location – Land contiguous to existing park
- ❖ Current Status – Discussion with adjacent landowner has occurred.

#### **DuBay Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Protect and improve quality by purchasing additional adjacent lands for future park expansion and protection from development.
- ❖ Location – Land contiguous to existing park

#### **Galecke Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Land contiguous to the park should be purchased for future park expansion and protection from development.

### **Green Circle Trail:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Expand existing facilities for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing.
- ❖ Location – Land that provides for expansion of existing trail system, as well as acquisition of private lands, where existing trail segments may be threatened.
- ❖ Current Status – Green Circle Committee is trying to secure long term agreements or purchases. The Green Circle Committee coordinates any acquisitions.

### **Jordan Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Expand existing facilities, preserve open space for future needs.
- ❖ Location – Land Contiguous to existing park

### **Lake Emily Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Expand existing facilities and preserve open space for future needs.
- ❖ Location – Land Contiguous to existing park

### **Plover River Greenbelt:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – To preserve the Plover River basin in a natural or wild state. This may involve the acquisition of such lands or the use of scenic easements. In addition to the information contained in this report, a more detailed study of the Plover River Basin should be prepared to allow for case-by-case consideration of acquisition/easement options.
- ❖ Location – Land Contiguous to Plover River
- ❖ Current Status – The Plover River Alliance has met several times with adjacent landowners. At this time Plover River Alliance is coordinating this project. The Parks Department monitors one conservation easement along the Plover River.

### **Standing Rocks Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Expand exiting facilities for cross-country skiing and preserve open space for future expansion needs.
- ❖ Location – Land Contiguous to existing park

### **Sunset Lake Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Land contiguous to the park should be purchased for future park expansion and protection from development.

### **Unique Natural Resource Areas:**

The County has adopted the Portage County Open Space Plan 2000 for identifying, preserving and in some cases purchasing environmentally significant lands. Of particular concern are those lands which are still undeveloped and which afford the opportunity to maintain significant natural or open space areas. Lands which are associated with stream corridors or other natural features, lands with

special scenic value, and lands which connect or link such areas, are given high priority for future protection. Purchase, land trade, conservation easements, or other compensatory forms of acquisition or development restrictions should be considered as alternatives/supplements to the use of conservancy-type zoning. Acquisition of desirable lands would eliminate the pressure for private rezoning/development requests, allow for public access, and allow the private landowner some form of compensation not presently afforded under conservancy zoning. Scenic easements should be considered, where public ownership is not desirable or feasible.

To aid in accomplishing this objective, the County should consider creating a new park classification to accommodate conservancy or open space areas. These “parks” would be left in their natural state or developed for very low intensity recreational uses, such as canoeing, fishing.

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – To protect and preserve unique natural resources areas, especially those identified in the Portage County Open Space Plan.
- ❖ Location – Land where unique natural resources occur or that need protection.
- ❖ Current Status – The Rocky Run Preserve and Minister Lake areas were acquired with the Land Preservation Fund.
- ❖ Proposed Action – Unique areas throughout Portage County should be identified; work to implement the recommendations of the Portage County Open Space Plan.

#### **Urban Park Recreation Facility:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – To acquire private property that may lead to the development of a public recreation facility.
- ❖ Location – Centrally located in the County.
- ❖ Current Status – The Park Commission has approved the Urban Park Concept.
- ❖ Proposed Action – Proposal has been stalled. Timeline for study should be developed.

#### **Wisconsin River Recreation Area:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Land contiguous to the park (north of existing County land) should be purchased for future park expansion and to protect the area from development.
- ❖ Current Status – Discussed acquiring land with Consolidated Water & Power Company in 2005.
- ❖ Proposed Action – Continue discussion with Consolidated Water & Power Company.

#### **Wolf Lake Park:**

- ❖ Purpose of Acquisition – Expand existing facilities, preserve open space for future needs and protect the shoreline from future development.
- ❖ Location – Land contiguous to existing park
- ❖ Current Status – The County is still interested in pursuing the acquisition to the south. Negotiations with landowners to the south have occurred but stalled.

## **DEVELOPMENT / IMPROVEMENTS PROJECTS**

The purpose of the following development/improvement projects is to: 1) Respond to overcrowding or other problems with existing facilities, 2) Provide new or expanded facilities where needed and 3). Improve the overall quality of the County Park and Recreation system.

### **Short Term Projects**

#### Carrie Frost

Discussions with the Almond/Bancroft School District have begun regarding constructing a new bathroom for park visitors.

#### Collins Park

The park residence is scheduled to be replaced in 2008.

#### Dewey Range Recreation Area

The Sheriff's Department law enforcement range construction should be completed in 2007.

#### Galecke Park

The boat landing will be repaired in 2007 and the pit toilet building is scheduled to be replaced during this plan period. Stream bank erosion control is an ongoing project.

#### Jordan Park

The pit toilet buildings are scheduled to be replaced during this plan period.

#### Lake Emily

A new pit toilet building in the north campground will be constructed in 2007.

#### Lake Helen

Planting trees for a vegetative barrier along the west and north boundary is an ongoing project.

#### Standing Rocks

The design phase for the winter recreation improvements began in 2007. A tubing hill and new ski hill will be designed and equipment for the terrain park has been purchased. A well to provide drinking water for dogs in the dog exercise area is planned for 2007 as is a pit toilet building to serve the dog exercise area, mountain bike trails and disc golf area.

#### Tomorrow River State Trail

The proposed bridge and trail construction over Co Hwy KK is still being delayed but the railroad is expected to approve the project in 2007 with completion in 2008.

#### Wisconsin River Recreation Area

Discussions with Consolidated Water and Power continue regarding expanding the park to the north for campground development, picnic area and fishing access. The Town of Dewey was not in favor of the project in 2005.

#### Wolf Lake

The adjacent landowner on the south side of the lake has contacted the County regarding selling his land to expand the park. Negotiations will begin after the appraisal is completed and a DNR land acquisition grant will be submitted in 2007.

## **Long Term Projects**

### Cate Park

A trail head bathroom and drinking water is identified in the Tomorrow River Trail master plan. This needs to be considered once the trail connector in Amherst Junction is completed.

### Collins Park

Further campground and park development and lake protection could occur if land contiguous to the park is purchased in the future.

### Dewey Recreation Area

Development of a trap range should be considered and land contiguous to the park should be purchased.

### Jordan Park

Campground expansion to the west of the current campground will occur when the demand exists in the future. Land contiguous to the park should be purchased for future park expansion and protection from development.

### Lake Emily

Campground expansion to the west will occur once the tree planting area matures. Although limited, land contiguous to the park should be purchased for future park expansion and protection from development.

### Standing Rocks

Continuation of park development should occur that will include snowmaking for some of the ski hills and the tubing hill. Land contiguous to the park should be purchased for future park expansion and protection from development.

### Linear Corridors

Connecting existing municipalities, parks, schools etc needs to be planned for in the future along with “green” or river corridors that can provide recreational opportunities.

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