

3. THE PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES IN THE FORT MCCOY REGION



The people of the Fort McCoy Region have an excellent Midwestern work ethic and strong family values. It is these attributes that explain the region’s high educational standards, highly skilled workforce and why the region is a safe place to live and raise a family.

In 2000, the Fort McCoy Region had a total population of 167,119 of which approximately two-thirds of the population lived in La Crosse County. The median age of the population in 2000 was 35.9 compared to the Nation’s slightly lower median age of 35.3. Of the total population of the region, 82.8 % are high school graduates or higher. This is higher than the national rate of 80.4%.

The Fort McCoy Region is becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse. The Fort McCoy Region has become much more ethnically and culturally diverse over the past quarter century. Table 3.1 illustrates that this diversification has not been limited to one ethnic group or race. The African-American population in the region has increased by 547% between 1980 and 2000. The region is home to many Native Americans whose population has doubled in the last twenty years. The Ho Chunk Nation makes up the largest proportion of the region’s Native American population. The Fort McCoy Region also has one of the three largest Hmong populations in State of Wisconsin. The Hmong make up over 2.2% of the region’s population. The category listed as “other” on the table is primarily representative of the Hispanic population in the region. As the chart shows this category has increased by 731% over the last twenty years.

TABLE 3.1
Fort McCoy Region—Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe Counties

Race	Census Pop. 1980	% of Tot Pop.	Census Pop. 1990	% of Tot Pop.	Census Pop. 2000	% of Tot Pop.	Pop. % Chge 1980-2000
White	141,079	98.7%	146,116	96.7%	157,466	94.2%	12%
African American	253	.2%	626	.4%	1,637	1.0%	547%
Native American	998	.7%	1,315	.9%	1,992	1.2%	100%
Asian, Pacific Islander	345	.2%	2,840	1.9%	3,646	2.2%	957%
Other	286	.2%	216	.1%	2,378	1.4%	731%
Total Population	142,961	100%	151,113	100%	167,119	100%	11%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce-Bureau of the Census

The diversification of the population has attributed to the social and cultural growth of the region. Private organizations as well as public institutions have been established to assist and promote different ethnic and cultural groups. The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse has an “Affirmative Action and Diversity Council” whose vision is “to recognize, value, celebrate, and utilize the diversity of the individuals in its community”. The La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc. assists Hmong residents and the community in recognizing each other’s values. These are two examples of efforts made in the region to promote ethnic and cultural diversity.

In the State of Wisconsin there are 7,337 companies certified to provide services to branches of the federal government. Over 420 of these companies are located in the Fort McCoy Region. Of these companies, many are in the Agriculture and Food Processing; Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products; and Wood Processing industry clusters.

The Agriculture and Food Processing; Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products; and Wood Processing industry clusters are the primary industry clusters that drive the region’s economy. Industry Clusters refer to groups of companies located in a certain geographic area and are engaged in similar or related activities. The companies usually have a close buy-sell relationship, use common technologies, share customers and/or share a labor pool that provides them with a competitive advantage. Industry cluster based economic development is built on the premise that cooperation between small companies and large companies in related industries will be more successful in achieving higher gains by working together than by companies working independently.

The businesses and the business activities in these clusters are identified by the U.S. Department of Labor Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Code System. The SIC codes group businesses by industry sector and by the products produced or the services provided by a business. In the Fort McCoy region there are three

major clusters that drive the local economy. They include the Food Processing (SIC 2000-2199); Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products (SIC 2200-3699); and the Wood and Furniture Products (SIC 2400-2599) clusters. In Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe counties there are 156 companies connected to one of the three primary industry sectors. When these companies are segregated by the individual sectors it shows that 28 companies are involved in the food processing sector, 52 in the wood and furniture sector, and 76 companies in the machinery, equipment and metal products sectors.

Jackson County Major Industry Clusters and Employers - In Jackson County there are twenty (20) companies engaged in one of three primary industry cluster activities. In the county there are four (4) companies involved in Food Processing; six (6) companies that manufacture Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products; and ten (10) businesses producing Wood and Furniture Products. These companies would provide the greatest prospects for off-base employment. In Jackson County, the Transportation Equipment manufacturing cluster is also an important sector of the county's economy that would also provide additional employment opportunities for the family members of Fort McCoy military personnel and the installation's support staff.

The following are listings of some of these companies, their products, and their employment ranges.

Jackson County's Machinery, Equipment, Metal Product Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
Leeson Electric Corp. Black River Falls, WI	Motor & Generator Mfg.	250-499
Fleetguard/Nelson MTC Black River Falls, WI	General Purpose Machinery Mfg.	100-249
D&S Mfg Black River Falls, WI	Metal Fabric. & Welding, Construct. Equipment	100-249
A.K.B. Tooling Inc. Melrose, WI	Woodworking Equip. & Tooling	<20

Jackson County's Food Processing Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
Foremost Foods USA Alma Center, WI	Cheese Processing	50-99
Land O' Lakes Black River Falls, WI	Animal Milk Replacer	20-49
North Bend Processing Melrose, WI	Beef & Pork Processing	<20
Pioneer Brewing Co Black River Falls, WI	Malt Beverages	<20

Jackson County's Wood & Furniture Prod. Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
Hart Tie & Lumber Co, Inc. Black River Falls, WI	Hardwood Lumber Mill Work	50-99
Palex/IFCO Systems NA Black River Falls, WI	Furniture Parts	20-49
Mosser Lee Company Millston, WI	Horticulture Products	20-49
Deli Inc. Millston, WI	Furniture & Fixture Products	<20
Magnum Timber Corp. Hixton, WI	Wood Chip Products	<20



D&S Manufacturing located in the City of Black River Falls, Wisconsin is certified to provide services to the federal government.

La Crosse County Major Industry Clusters and Employers - In La Crosse County, there are ninety-five (95) companies engaged in one of the three industry activities. There are sixteen (16) companies involved in Food Processing; twenty-four (24) businesses producing Wood and Furniture Products and fifty-five (55) companies manufacturing Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products. These companies would provide for off base employment for the family members of military personnel and the installation's support staff. There are additional industry clusters that play a significant role in La Crosse County's economy. The most notable is the Health Service Cluster which is described in more detail in the Health Care section of this report.

The following are listings of some of these companies, their products, and their employment ranges.

La Crosse County's Machinery, Equipment, Metal Products Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
The Trane Company La Crosse, WI	Bldg Auto. Systems, Heating, Air Conditioning	1000+
Chart Heat Exchangers LP La Crosse, WI	Brazed Aluminum Heat Exchangers & Couplings	100-249
Metallics Inc. Onalaska, WI	Nameplates & pressure sensitive decals	100-249
Crown Cork & Seal Co. Inc. La Crosse, WI	Beverage cans	100-249
Venture Machine & Tool Inc. Onalaska, WI	Precision Machinery & Production Tooling	50-99

La Crosse County's Food Processing Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
City Brewing Company Inc. La Crosse, WI	Malt Beverages	250-499
Great Lakes Cheese of WI Inc La Crosse, WI	Cheese Products	250-499
Metz Baking Company La Crosse, WI	Croutons, Stuffing Mix Products	50-99
Main Street Ingredients La Crosse, WI	Dairy Products	50-99
Wis-Pak Inc. La Crosse, WI	Institutional Package, Carbonated Beverages	50-99

La Crosse County's Wood & Furniture Prod. Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
Webster Industry Inc. Bangor, WI	Hardwood Lumber, Millwork, Furniture Prts	250-499
Cabinet Factory Inc. La Crosse, WI	Oak Doors, Door Fronts & Drawers	100-249
Badger Corrugating Inc. La Crosse, WI	Blg Product Assembly	100-249
Coulee Reg. Enterprizes Inc. Bangor, WI	Hardwood Molding, Cabinet Prts, Flooring	50-99
Northwest Hardwoods Div. Onalaska, WI	Lumber Processing & Millwork	50-99



The Trane Co. headquarters in the City of La Crosse, WI. The Trane Co. is certified to provide services to the federal government.

Monroe County Major Industry Clusters and Employers - In Monroe County there are forty (40) companies involved in one of the three primary industry cluster production activities. There are eight (8) businesses in the Food Processing Cluster, fifteen (15) companies in the Machinery, Equipment and Metal Products Cluster, and seventeen (17) companies involved in the Wood and Furniture Products Cluster. The businesses in these three industry clusters could provide employment opportunities for family members of the military personnel and the support staff that are stationed at Fort McCoy.

The following are listings of some of the companies, their products, and their employment ranges.

Monroe County's Machinery, Equipment, Metal Products Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
The TORO Company Tomah, WI	Turf Mfg, Landscape Equipment	500-999
Northern Engraving Corp. Sparta, WI	Nameplates & Automotive Trim	500-999
USEMCO Inc. Tomah, WI	Sewage & Water Pumps & Storage Tanks	100-249
Sparta Mfg. Co. Inc. Sparta, WI	Gray iron cylinder sleeves	100-249
Southside Machine Inc. Sparta, WI	Rebuilt Automotive Metal Stampings	<20

Monroe County's Food Processing Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
CFI of Wisconsin, Inc. Sparta, WI	Cheese Products	250-499
Valley Pride Pack Inc. Norwalk	Meat Processing	250-499
Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc. Tomah, WI	Cranberry Processing	100-249
Dean Pet Care Tomah, WI	Pet Food	20-49
Foremost Farms USA Sparta, WI	Milk Products	20-49
Wisconsin Hill & Valle Cheese Cashton, WI	Cheese Products	<20

Monroe County's Wood & Furniture Prod. Cluster		
Company	Product	# Emp
Rockland Flooring Co. Rockland, WI	Wood Flooring for Truck Trailers	100-149
Universal Forest Products Inc. Warrens, WI	Lumber Processing	50-99
Lake States Lumber Inc. Sparta, WI	Wood Pallet Components	20-49
Woodland Container Tomah, WI	Wooden Crates	20-49
Pallet Factory Inc. Tomah, WI	Wooden Pallets	<20



The Toro Company in the City of Tomah, WI.

Other major employers in the Fort McCoy Region that benefit from the region's strong manufacturing base are schools, universities, colleges, healthcare institutions, public utilities, retailing and transportation businesses. The Fort McCoy Region has a wide range of other businesses and institutions that provide quality products, services and jobs that further contribute to the region's economy and high quality of life. The following is a listing of some of these businesses and institutions.

Jackson County's Other Major Employers		
Employer	Indus., Prod. or Service	# Emp
Ho Chunk Nation Black River Falls, WI	Native American Tribal Gov't	1,000 or more
Millis Transfer Black River Falls, WI	General Freight Trucking, Long-Distance, Truckload	500-999
Lunda Construction Black River Falls, WI	Highway, Street & Bridge Construction	250-499
Hoffman Construction Black River Falls, WI	Highway, Street & Bridge Construction	250-499
County of Jackson Black River Falls, WI	Exec & Legislative Offices, comb.	250-499
BRF Public Schools, Black River Falls, WI	Elementary & Secondary Schools	250-499
Jackson Correc. Institut. Black River Falls, WI	Correctional Institutions	250-499
Black River Mem. Hospital Black River Falls, WI	General Medical & Surgical Hospital	100-249
Alma Center Public Schools Alma Center, WI	Elementary & Secondary Schools	100-249

La Crosse County's Other Major Employers		
Employer	Indus., Prod. or Service	# Emp
Gundersen Clinic La Crosse, WI	Offices of Physicians (except mental health spec.)	1,000 or more
Gunderson Lutheran Med. La Crosse, WI	Health Care Services	1,000 or more
Franciscan Skemp Med. Ctr La Crosse, WI	Health Care Services	1,000 or more
CenturyTel Service Group La Crosse, WI	Corp. Subsidiary & Reg. Managing Office	1,000 or more
La Crosse Public Sch. La Crosse, WI	Elementary & Secondary Schools	1,000 or more
County of La Crosse La Crosse, WI	Exec & Legislative Offices, comb.	1,000 or more
University of WI-La Crosse La Crosse, WI	Colleges, Universities, Pro- fessional Schools	1,000 or more
City of La Crosse La Crosse, WI	Exec & Legislative Offices, comb.	500-999
Western Wis. Tech. College La Crosse, WI	Junior Colleges	500-999

Monroe County's Other Major Employers		
Employer	Indus., Prod. or Service	# Emp
Walmart Distribution Ctr. Tomah, WI	General Warehousing & Storage	1,000 or more
Cardinal Glass Industries Tomah, WI	Glass Product Mfg	500-999
CFI of Wisconsin Sparta, WI	Dairy Product Merchant Wholesaler	250-499
Fort McCoy Sparta, WI	National Security	500-999
Tomah Veterans Hospital Tomah, WI	Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Hospitals	500-999
Tomah Public Schools Tomah, WI	Elementary & Secondary Schools	500-999
County of Monroe Sparta, WI	Exec & Legislative Offices, comb.	250-499
Sparta Area Sch. District Sparta, WI	Elementary & Secondary Schools	250-499

Source: Wis. Dept. of Workforce Development-Office of Economic Advisors

The region's strong manufacturing sector has had positive effects on other sectors of the economy resulting in low unemployment rates and opportunities for employment. The Fort McCoy Region has enjoyed relatively low unemployment rates. In 2003 all counties recorded unemployment rates lower than the state and nation. These low unemployment figures for the region are evidence of job availability for Fort McCoy family members.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Jackson County	4.1	3.2	4.3	5.1	5.2	4.7
La Crosse County	2.8	2.9	3.3	3.7	4.3	4.2
Monroe County	4.4	3.9	4.5	5.4	5.5	5.4
State of Wisconsin	3.4	3.0	3.6	4.5	5.5	5.6
United States	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.7	5.8	6.0

Source: Wis. Dept. of Workforce Development-Local Area Unemployment Statistics-Not Seasonally Adjusted-Benchmarked to 2003

Jobs in demand in the Fort McCoy Region. The lower unemployment rates illustrated in Table 3.2 provides evidence of job availability in the region. Every year the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development compiles a list of the fastest growth jobs in various regions of the State of Wisconsin. The January 2004 workforce profiles released for the counties in the Fort McCoy Region highlighted and projected through the year 2010 the fastest growth jobs in the region. Table 3.3 provides a list of the fastest growth jobs in the Fort McCoy Region. The table further demonstrates the availability of skilled and well paying jobs in the Fort McCoy Region.

Jobs In Demand	Education & Training Typically Required
Computer support specialists	Associate degree
Network/computer systems admin.	Bachelor's degree
Medical records/health info techs	Associate degree
Medical assistants	1-12 Mo. On-the-job-training
Personal home care aides	1 month or less training
Computer/information systems mgrs	Work experience and degree
Social/human services assistants	1-12 Mo. On-the-job-training
Computer systems analysts	Bachelor's degree
Home health aides	1 month or less training
Dental assistants	1-12 Mo. On-the-job-training

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, January 2004

There are numerous business assistance services available in the region for those who are interested in starting their own business. Some of the more prominent services include: University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is located in the City of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The SBDC

is part of a statewide network of Small Business Development Centers that uses a variety of resources to help small business owners solve their business concerns. Services are targeted toward businesses that are planning for expansion, improving efficiency of operations or resolving specific problems. The SBDC offers one-on-one advising for owners, managers, and prospective entrepreneurs. The one-on-one advising services are offered at no cost.

SCORE. The SCORE Association is a national nonprofit organization with a public service mission. SCORE volunteers provide small business counseling and training through a network of 389 chapters across the Nation. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). SCORE provides professional guidance and information that is accessible to all, to maximize the success of emerging and small businesses. There are SCORE offices in the City of La Crosse, Wisconsin, in La Crosse County and in Camp Douglas, Wisconsin in Juneau County.

Western Wisconsin Technology Zone. The State of Wisconsin in 2002 designated eight technology zones in the state to promote the development and expansion of high technology businesses and encourage the development of technology-based clusters. Each zone received an allocation of \$5 million in available tax credits that certified technology zone businesses may apply against their Wisconsin income tax liability. The Western Wisconsin Technology Zone consists of seven counties and includes Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe counties in the Fort McCoy Region. The businesses in the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone or new business start-up companies that have expansion plans, create new high paying jobs, and are engaged in high technology activities, are eligible for the tax zone credits.

Local Business Loan Programs. One of the most important elements in an entrepreneur's decision to start or expand their business is the access to reasonable financing. In the Fort McCoy Region a number of communities and county governments have established loan programs. In Jackson, La Crosse and Monroe counties there are ten business revolving loan funds (RLFs) in operation. RLF programs provide "gap financing", which is the difference between the total cost of the project and the private financing that is available. The RLFs often provide businesses a loan with lower interest rates and more flexible terms. Local

governments and the banking community use the business loan programs to finance higher risk and reward economic development projects that increase tax base and jobs.

For more detailed information on these and other business assistance programs in the Fort McCoy Region, refer to Appendix B of this Plan.