

# VERNON COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN



2021 - 2025



PREPARED BY:  
*Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission*





# Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2025

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in collaboration with:

Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department  
Vernon County Economic Development and Tourism Department

A special thanks to members of the public who took the time to fill out the survey, offer online feedback on the goals and objectives, and/or attended a public meeting. Thank you to the stakeholder groups who took the time to speak with County staff members and share their interests, concern, and ideas for the Plan.

Adopted by the Vernon County Board of Supervisors on June 21, 2021



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# Introduction

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The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance to Vernon County for the preservation, future acquisition, development, and improvements of outdoor recreation and open space facilities. The plan provides details of public recreation and open space areas within the County, along with general information on recreation opportunities on school, county, and state properties in the area. The plan will assist Vernon County in meeting the present and future outdoor recreational needs of its residents.

The completion of this 5-year Outdoor Recreation Plan followed by the County's adoption of the plan will make the County's projects eligible for various state and federal funding programs through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). Additionally, the preparation of the plan is an efficient way to plan for the allocation of funds to be placed toward future recreation opportunities in the community.

The inventory of outdoor recreation facilities is included in the document. A survey was posted on the County's website and distributed by the Land and Water Conservation Department to gather feedback about outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities. Staff provided input regarding long- and short-term goals of the County's outdoor recreation parks and outdoor spaces.

Potential projects for the future are identified based on input from staff and long-term planning initiatives regarding future maintenance and priorities for the County's park system. The goals and objectives are intended to guide future decisions for investment. They begin on the next page.

Vernon County requested the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission to coordinate and prepare this Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Regional Planning Commission staff, recognizing the value of coordinating all outdoor recreational planning into an integrated document, proposed for all Towns and incorporated communities to be included in this plan. The County agreed and the County Board Chairman invited all communities to participate in the County planning process. The Plan will be adopted by the County and each participating municipality before it is effective in the given jurisdiction.



# 1. Goals, Objectives, and Stewardship

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The following are Vernon County's goals and objectives to guide outdoor recreation planning, coordination, and development.

## **Goal 1: Continue to maintain the County's outdoor park and recreation facilities.**

- Objectives:*
- Maintain and improve the accessibility of the County's existing outdoor recreation facilities.
  - Strive for new and existing facilities to meet the needs of all citizens, including children, teenagers, the elderly, and individuals with mobility challenges.
  - Provide year-round outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities.
  - Monitor the general overall condition of the County's outdoor recreation amenities annually and establish an outdoor recreation Improvements Program.

## **Goal 2: Protect and enhance the unique natural resources within Vernon County.**

- Objectives:*
- Maintain and build awareness of the vulnerability of the County's valuable resources, especially the bluffs, Kickapoo, Bad Axe, and Mississippi River, and watersheds.
  - Provide facilities that enable recreational users the opportunity to enjoy the County's natural resources without causing any adverse impacts on these resources.

## **Goal 3: Use the County's resources efficiently and enhance funding opportunities for park and recreational needs of the County.**

- Objectives:*
- Evaluate recreation facility usage.
  - Monitor state and federal grant programs for future park development. Apply for funds if appropriate.
  - Provide adequate facilities at existing parks. Before any additional park land acquisition determine the potential costs and benefits of all development of a project prior to undertaking the project.

## **Goal 4: Provide and improve public access to outdoor recreation land and water.**

- Objectives:*
- Gather input regarding the County's outdoor recreation facilities. These entities/partners could include the WDNR, Vernon County, clubs, and other organizations.

## **Goal 5: Promote outdoor recreation as a means to better public health and wellness as well a major asset to draw visitors for tourism.**

- Objectives:*
- Improve the coordination and cooperation of the County and other public or private entities in developing, promoting, and using all current and future outdoor recreation areas.

## **Stewardship**

It is Vernon County's goal to foster awareness and experiences that build an ethic of stewardship and responsibility to care for natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation infrastructure. With a growing population and increased demands on Vernon County's open spaces and public lands, the need for responsible stewardship of our County's critical places is urgent. This priority emphasizes the need to continue the 2019-2023 SCORP efforts to build a stronger ethic among everyone who spends time in our public lands and open spaces, preventing degradation to landscapes and respecting enjoyable recreational experiences for all.

Conservation is intrinsically linked with recreation – our land, water and wildlife provide the natural beauty on which our entire recreation economy is built. Conservation of these resources is essential to ensure the quality of our outdoor recreational experiences, and the sustainability of the land, water, and wildlife themselves. Outdoor volunteerism, conservation corps, and other stewardship organizations provide an important source of support in maintaining recreational land use, rehabilitating areas damaged by floods and fire, educating the public about natural resources, and cultivating leaders who care for public and private lands.

The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework of minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. Although Leave No Trace has its roots in backcountry settings, the Principles have been adapted so that they can be applied anywhere — from remote wilderness areas, to local parks and even in your own backyard. They also apply to almost every recreational activity. For more information on Leave No Trace Principles visit <https://Int.org/why/7-principles/>.

### **Leave No Trace Seven Principles**

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire).
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

## 2. Description of Planning Area

### Natural Resources of Vernon County

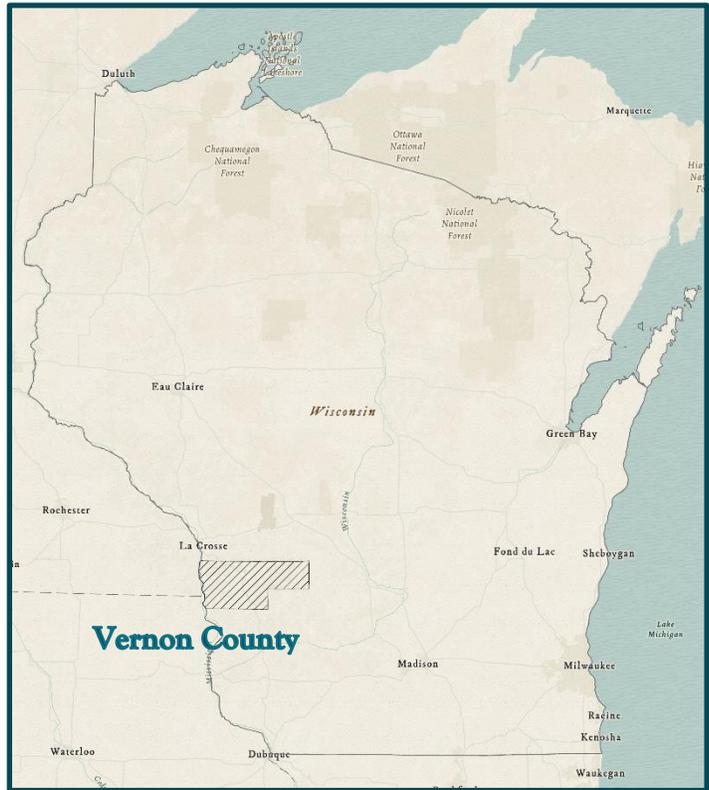
Vernon County is located within the state's Western Upland. This is in the Driftless Area, a region untouched by glacial. The name 'driftless' comes from the root word drift, also meaning till, and, where no glaciers touched, no till could be deposited. The sculpted topography was carved out by glacial melt 11,000 years ago by retreating glaciers. What remains are scenic ridges and valleys that make up the area now commonly referred to as the "Coulee Region."

*Size and Location:* Vernon County is comprised of 515,200 acres, approximately 805 square miles. The County is 46 miles at its widest point and 21 miles at its longest point. The County is bordered on its north by La Crosse and Monroe Counties on the east by Juneau and Sauk Counties, and on the south by Richland and Crawford Counties. The main channel of the Mississippi River and the State of Minnesota border the County to the west. Vernon County has 12 incorporated communities and 21 towns.

*Climate:* The Vernon County climate is continental, characterized by warm summers, cold winters, and moisture throughout the year. The coldest month of the year is January with an average daily high temperature of 23°F and the warmest month of the year is July with an average daily temperature of 82°F. Vernon County annually receives approximately 34.53 inches of precipitation.

*Soils:* There is considerable variation in the soils of Vernon County. The most common soil type is Dorerton, very stony-Elbaville complex on 30 to 60 percent slopes. The second is Pepin silt loam on 12 to 20 percent slopes which is moderately eroded. The third is Seaton silt loam on driftless ridges with a slope of 6 to 20 percent and moderately eroded.

Dorerton soils are used principally for growing trees. Some areas are pastured. Native vegetation is mixed deciduous forest with northern red oak, white oak, burr oak, and aspen being the dominant species. The Pepin series consists of well drained soils which are deep or very deep to a lithic contact with dolostone bedrock on hills in bedrock-controlled uplands. These soils formed in loess, in clayey pedisidiment, and in loamy residuum from the underlying dolostone bedrock. Seaton soils are well drained soils formed in coarse loess. These soils are on ridge tops and side slopes on uplands near the bluffs along the major valleys and on treads and risers on high stream terraces. Trail building is limited on Seaton and Pepin series soils as they are prone to water erosion. Dorerton soils can have large rock and steep slopes also making trail building limited.



*Surface Waters:* Vernon County's rivers, streams, and lakes are important outdoor recreational assets. There are four manmade lakes in Vernon County: Jersey Valley, Sidie Hollow, Rung Hollow, and Seas Branch, all of which provide fishing, swimming, and canoeing opportunities. The Mississippi River is the biggest contributor to surface water recreation in the County as it is utilized for fishing, motor boating, jet skiing, water skiing, sailing, swimming, and canoeing. The Kickapoo River, winding from Ontario to the southern part of the County, is an acclaimed canoeing river. Other rivers to note are the Little Baraboo River, Coon Creek, Bad Axe River, and Pine River. Over 200 miles of streams in Vernon County are classified as trout waters that offer some of the best trout fishing in the United States.



*Woodlands:* Vernon County has approximately 225,000-forested acres. Much of the forested land is in private ownership. Vernon County is enrolled in Wisconsin's County Managed Forest Law Program (MFL). Vernon County, along with other Wisconsin counties, have entered into an agreement with the State of Wisconsin to manage their timberland in a sound and sustainable manner.

The native forest of the County is mostly hardwood or deciduous trees. Oak is the predominant hardwood in the area. Northern red oak is twice as common as white oak. The principal woodland products are railroad ties, lumber, and fuel wood.

### **Social Characteristics**

*Population:* Table 1 details the population trends in Vernon County over the last 4 censuses along with 2020 estimate and projections for future populations of the County. In 2010, Vernon County had a population of 29,773, which is projected to grow and be 35,126 in 2030, and 36,520 in 2040. Vernon County is predicted to be one of the fastest growing counties in the State, by percent, from 2010-2040. According to DOA, Vernon County's population is predicted to increase by 22.7% from 2010-2040. The City of Viroqua is the county seat and is the largest city in the county with a population of 4,187. The projected growth in population will place more demands on outdoor recreation facilities and increase the need for an updated outdoor recreation plan.

*Population Age:* According to 2010 U.S. Census Figures, Vernon County had a median age of 41.5. This is an increase of 2.4 years since the 2000 Census and is higher than the median age of the State of 38.5, and the Nation of 37.2. The County's percentage of population 65 years and older was 16.7%. This figure is also higher than the State's percentage of 13.7%, and Nation's 13.0%. On the other end of the age scale, the percentage of the County's population under the age of 20 was 28.8%, which was also higher than the State's 26.4%, and Nation's 26.9%.

*Median Household Income:* Median household income in Vernon County in 2017 was \$49,996 or 88% of the State median household income of \$56,759. Compared to a median income in 2016 of \$49,476, this represents a 1.05% annual growth. The Town of Hamburg had the highest median income in 2017 at \$83,906 and the Village of Readstown had the lowest at \$31,250.

*Urban/Rural:* According to the 2010 Census, Vernon County has 39.9% of its population living in incorporated communities. This percentage has slowly decreased over the last 40 years and dropped 2.6% since 2000. In 1980 the County had 42.4% of its population living in incorporated communities. The decline of over 2% from 2000 to 2010 indicates a trend of people wishing to move out of the incorporated communities to live in rural areas. This movement of people will have an impact on the access and number of private lands for recreation purposes.

As more people move to the rural areas and farms are sold for development, lands previously used for recreation are lost. Many rural residents can find extended outdoor recreation experiences on their own land. Snowmobiling, cross country skiing, hiking, and scenic walks can all be done on their own property and their dependence upon government sponsored recreation facilities may be used primarily for support of team sports. The small lot urban dweller, whether in a city of 2,000, a village of 200, or a rural subdivision, does not have the capability to provide a myriad of extensive outdoor recreation experiences on his or her own land. Therefore, they are more dependent upon a public park system which offers a broad range of outdoor opportunities including hunting, hiking, camping, and picnicking. The City of Viroqua is the largest incorporated community with a 2010 Census population of 4,187 or 35.2% of the people living in incorporated communities (see Table 1 and Map 1 for County population data).

*Farming:* Vernon County is a rural County and farming is an integral part of the driftless landscape. The past 4 decades has seen a decline in the number of farms and the number of acres in farming within the County. In 1970 there were 2,740 farms with a total of 461,000 in the County. By 2017, this number has declined to 1,961 farms on only 337,086 acres. This is a decline of 779 farms (-28.4% change) and 123,914 acres (-26.9% change). As discussed previously, the decline in the number of acres of farms has a detrimental effect on outdoor recreation.

*Employment:* According to the 2010 Census, the highest category of employment was healthcare and social assistance accounting for 26.9% of employment within the County. The second highest was retail trade with 17.2%, followed by manufacturing with 13.3% of employment.



Round barn, Vernon County

**Table 1. Vernon County Populations, Estimates, and Projections**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Census 1980 (1)</b>	<b>Census 1990 (1)</b>	<b>Census 2000 (1)</b>	<b>Census 2010 (1)</b>	<b>Percent Change 80-10</b>	<b>Estimate 2020 (2)</b>	<b>Projection 2030 (2)</b>
T. Bergen	1117	1223	1317	1364	22.1%	589	647
T. Christiana	823	851	871	931	13.1%	383	425
T. Clinton	920	1093	1354	1358	47.6%	368	414
T. Coon	757	701	683	728	-3.8%	315	352
T. Forest	551	543	583	634	15.1%	251	281
T. Franklin	1047	926	923	1140	8.9%	456	541
T. Genoa	787	661	705	789	0.3%	341	388
T. Greenwood	546	574	770	847	55.1%	251	285
T. Hamburg	774	712	848	973	25.7%	388	442
T. Harmony	636	551	739	755	18.7%	301	346
T. Hillsboro	763	642	766	799	4.7%	318	356
T. Jefferson	919	915	974	1143	24.4%	471	533
T. Kickapoo	523	472	566	626	19.7%	257	298
T. Liberty	171	189	167	252	47.4%	120	143
T. Stark	322	259	349	359	11.5%	165	188
T. Sterling	626	598	713	633	1.1%	236	242
T. Union	405	420	531	700	72.8%	249	298
T. Viroqua	1663	1449	1560	1631	-1.9%	714	805
T. Webster	594	529	676	778	31.0%	326	391
T. Wheatland	407	436	533	561	37.8%	289	334
T. Whitestown	418	471	509	502	20.1%	211	232
V. Chaseburg	279	365	306	284	1.8%	124	123
V. Coon Valley	758	817	714	752	-0.8%	341	364
V. De Soto (Pt.)	252	253	248	179	-29.0%	87	86
V. Genoa	283	266	263	253	-10.6%	113	117
V. La Farge	746	766	775	719	-3.6%	312	313
V. Ontario	398	407	476	554	39.2%	232	264
V. Readstown	396	420	395	409	3.3%	203	222
V. Stoddard	762	775	815	774	1.6%	355	378
V. Viola (Pt.)	223	207	254	222	-0.4%	101	107
C. Hillsboro	1263	1288	1302	1413	11.9%	631	693
C. Viroqua	3716	3922	4335	4187	12.7%	2166	2337
C. Westby	1797	1866	2045	2134	18.8%	1040	1172
<b>Vernon County</b>	<b>25642</b>	<b>25617</b>	<b>28056</b>	<b>29773</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>30785</b>	<b>35126</b>
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>4705642</b>	<b>4891599</b>	<b>5363715</b>	<b>5363675</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>5678675</b>	<b>6048675</b>

(1) Decennial U.S. Census – U.S. Bureau of Census

(2) Population Projections, Wis. Dept. of Admin. – Demographics Service Center

# 3. Review of Recreation Demand

## Introduction

The planning of outdoor recreation facilities is of utmost importance for the development of healthy and viable communities. Three important parts of recreation planning are: (1) Determine the demand for different types of outdoor recreation activity, (2) Inventory the existing facilities which accommodate the various types of outdoor recreation activity, and (3) Evaluate the existing facilities and determine the need for improvements or additions to meet the existing and anticipated recreational demand.

According to the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (<https://recreationroundtable.org/impact/>):

*“The outdoor recreation industry does more than bring joy to millions of Americans: It helps drive our economy. In 2018, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) included outdoor recreation in its calculations of U.S. GDP for the very first time—a significant step that formally recognizes the critical role the industry plays in supporting economic growth in the United States. In addition, the BEA found that the outdoor recreation industry is growing rapidly, eclipsing the average increase in overall U.S. GDP.*

*Outdoor recreation is also a major generator of quality American jobs in industries ranging from manufacturing to retail to tourism. These jobs can be found from coast to coast and play a critical role in the economic health of local and state economies.”*



Activity Group	% of WI residents that participated at least once in the last 12 months
<b>Hiking</b> Hiking/walking/running on trails	<b>68%</b>
<b>Nature Observation</b> Bird/wildlife watching Nature photography Gathering berries, mushrooms, etc.	<b>66%</b>
<b>Boating-related</b> Motor boating Canoeing/kayaking Personal watercraft (jet-ski) Sailing Stand-up paddle boarding Waterskiing	<b>61%</b>
<b>Fishing</b> Lake fishing Stream/river fishing Ice fishing	<b>49%</b>
<b>Camping</b> Tent camping RV/pop-up camping	<b>41%</b>
<b>Dog-related activities</b> Walking/running dog on trails Visiting a dog park	<b>38%</b>
<b>Bicycling</b> Bicycling on rail-trails or other developed trails Mountain biking Fat-tire biking/snow biking	<b>35%</b>
<b>Hunting</b> Big game hunting Turkey hunting Small game hunting Migratory bird hunting	<b>27%</b>
<b>Motorized trail-based activities</b> ATVs/UTVs on trails-routes Snowmobiling 4-WD vehicles on trails-routes Motorcycles on trails-routes	<b>25%</b>

## Recreational Demand

As we progress into a new decade, events and issues that influence outdoor recreation in the future are changing. Issues, which will influence future outdoor recreation activities include:

- Land use patterns are shifting
- Ownership patterns in rural areas are changing
- Budgets for operation and maintenance of recreation resources are not expected to increase

In addition, the demographics of the County are shifting. As pointed out earlier in this plan, the County's median age increased 5.3 years since 1990. As people age, recreation activities they participate in may change. The changes in family structure (an increase in single parent families) also changes recreation choices.

For guidance on the demand for recreational outdoor activities, a review of the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2019-2023 was conducted. During the development of SCORP, numerous Wisconsin residents were questioned as to how often they participate in various recreation activities. Data is collected at 8 regional levels; Vernon County lies in the Mississippi River Corridor. The box to the right indicates the most popular recreation activities in the State with activities **bolded** indicating the top activities in the Mississippi River Corridor Region.

### Favorite Places to Visit Based on Public Input

Of the people providing input, the majority (67%) selected the quality of trails as one of the top four most important factors in determining their favorite property to visit. This is expected, given that many respondents noted their participation in a variety of motorized and non-motorized activities. The following were the next three important factors to determine favorable places to visit:

1. Desire to be in a quiet place
2. Maps, signs, or information about the property
3. The quality of the habitat

Wisconsinites have historically participated in outdoor recreation at higher rates than the national average. The table to the left shows participation rates of Wisconsin residents for general groupings of nature-based recreation activities. For comparison, 46% of Wisconsin residents participated in ball sports (golf, tennis, basketball, softball, baseball, soccer, and handball).

77% of respondents believe more outdoor recreational opportunities are needed in the Mississippi River Corridor Region. The opportunity that was most frequently selected as needed in the Mississippi River Corridor Region was more trails for hiking, walking, or running, which was selected by nearly half of respondents.

The Mississippi River Corridor Region is a unique setting lending itself well to various types of outdoor recreation. Trout fishermen are drawn from throughout the Midwest to the many streams draining to the

#### Popular recreation activities in which respondents to the State survey participate

##### **Bicycling – paved trails**

Bicycling – mountain biking,  
single track

Bicycling – winter/fat tire

Camping – tent

Canoeing/kayaking

Cross-country  
skiing/snowshoeing

**Fishing – from a boat, canoe,  
or kayak**

**Fishing – from shore**

**Harvesting berries,  
mushrooms, etc.**

**Hiking, walking, running on  
trails**

Mississippi River. These same rivers attract paddlers and bluffs are attractive to mountain bikers. The area provides exceptional habitat for many game species, especially deer and turkey. Since the huge success of wild turkey reintroduction beginning in Vernon County back in the 1970's, this region has been a hotbed for spring turkey hunting. The river is a migratory bird flyway which attracts waterfowl hunters during the fall migration as countless birds make their way south. The bluffs are also home to rare plant species and natural communities. With the abundance of nature, this area offers countless avenues to be explored.

These communities are partnering with local citizen groups, raising funds, and developing parks, trails, and accesses to waterways, attracting visitors year-round. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCF) was enacted by Congress in 1965 "to strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States" through outdoor recreation. From 1965 to 2017, Vernon County has been awarded \$454,910 by LWCF and has been used for 12 projects.

According to Spending Potential Index, based on Esri forecast for 2020 and 2025, Vernon County residents spend more money per year on recreational vehicles and fees than the national average. These expenses are predominately on boats, trailers, campers, and RVs. The MPI (Market potential Index), which measures the likelihood of adult spending behaviors based on purchasing patterns, is another indicator used by Esri to predict spending patterns in a region from 2020 to 2025. Based on these projections, Vernon County residents participate approximately 50% more in freshwater fishing, rifle and shotgun hunting, target shooting, archery, and motorcycling than the national average.

**Future Recreation Needs**

Based on the 2019-2023 SCORP, the Mississippi River Corridor Region rates recreational activities as high, medium, or low relative to needs of the region. The groupings are as follows:

Future Recreation Needs – High	Future Recreation Needs – Medium	Future Recreation Needs – Low
Bicycling – touring/road riding	ATV/UTV riding	Dog sledding/ skijoring
Bicycling – mountain/off road	Bicycling – fat tire/snow	Dog training
Bird or wildlife watching	Fishing – lake from shore	Dog Trialing
Camping – developed	Fishing – ice fishing	Geocaching
Camping – primitive	Four-wheel vehicle driving	Off-highway motorcycle riding
Canoeing or kayaking	Horseback riding	Rock climbing
Cross Country Skiing	Horse cart driving	Sailing, windsurfing, rowing, etc.
Dog Walking	Hunting – migratory birds	Snowmobiling
Fishing – lake from vessel	Hunting – small game	Scuba diving/snorkeling
Fishing – river from vessel	Hunting – turkey	Whitewater rafting
Fishing – stream or shore wading	Motorboating (waterski, tubing)	
Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	Swimming in lakes and rivers	
Hiking, walking, trail running	Target shooting – archery	
Hunting – big game	Target shooting – firearms	
Nature photography	Trapping	
Nature based education programs		
Picnicking		
Snowshoeing		
Visit a beach, beach walking		

**Definitions**

To assist in the interpretation and implementation of the Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan, the following terms have been identified.

*Community Park (30-50 acres)* – A park designed to serve several municipalities or neighborhoods and to provide many recreational opportunities for people of all ages.

*Neighborhood Park (5-10 acres)* – A park usually less than 2 acres in size, designed to serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.

*Neighborhood Playground* – A facility often provided in conjunction with a community school. It is designed to serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood and can accommodate a variety of informal or active athletic activities.

*Specialized Recreation Area* – Areas restricted by design to certain uses and may not always be available for use by the public. In some cases, they may serve an exceedingly small segment of the community’s population. Golf courses, historic sites, and conservancy areas are examples of specialized recreation areas.

*Open Space* – Primarily land and water that is owned or managed by federal, state, or local governments, or a conservancy organization that is preserved for public use. Examples include wetlands, woodlands, wildlife refuges, prairies/meadows, rock outcroppings, etc.

*Pathways and Parkways* – Spaces that are connections related to travel such as trail or water trail providing connectivity for recreation and/or transportation purposes.

*Recreation Trail* – A travel way established through construction or use and is passable by the following, including but not limited to foot traffic, bicycles, cross country skis, off road recreation vehicles, snowmobiles, etc.

*Wayside* – Locations adjacent to a public highway that provides motorists with a convenient opportunity to stop and rest. Historical markers, restrooms, drinking water, picnic area, and waste disposal are commonly found at waysides.

## **Recreation Standards**

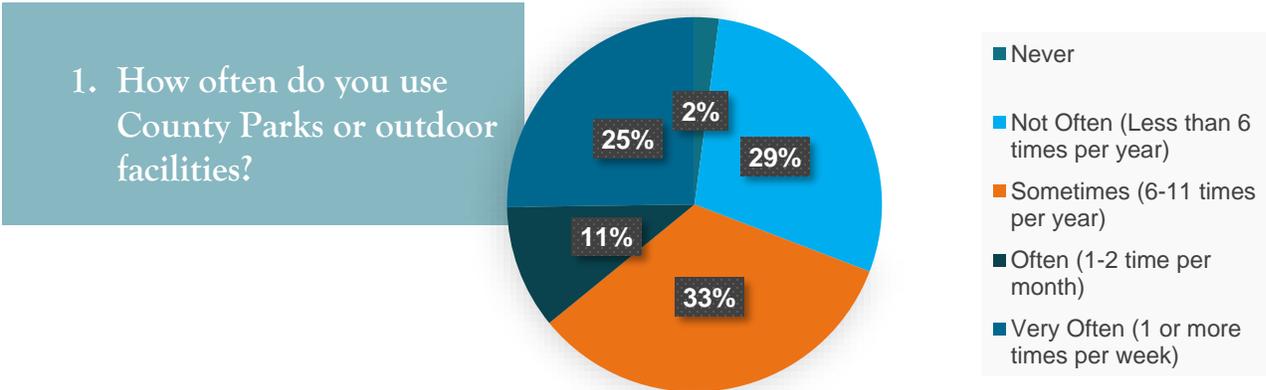
One accepted way to measure the adequacy of a county’s park system is to determine the number of people the system serves or has the capacity to serve. This is accomplished by assigning an acreage requirement for each type of recreation facility for every 1,000 people in the service area. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has set the following “rule of thumb” standards for designing recreation facilities:

<b>“Rule of Thumb” Standards</b>
Neighborhood Playground: 2 acres per 1,000 people
Community Park: 5 acres per 1,000 people
Specialized Recreation Area: as needed

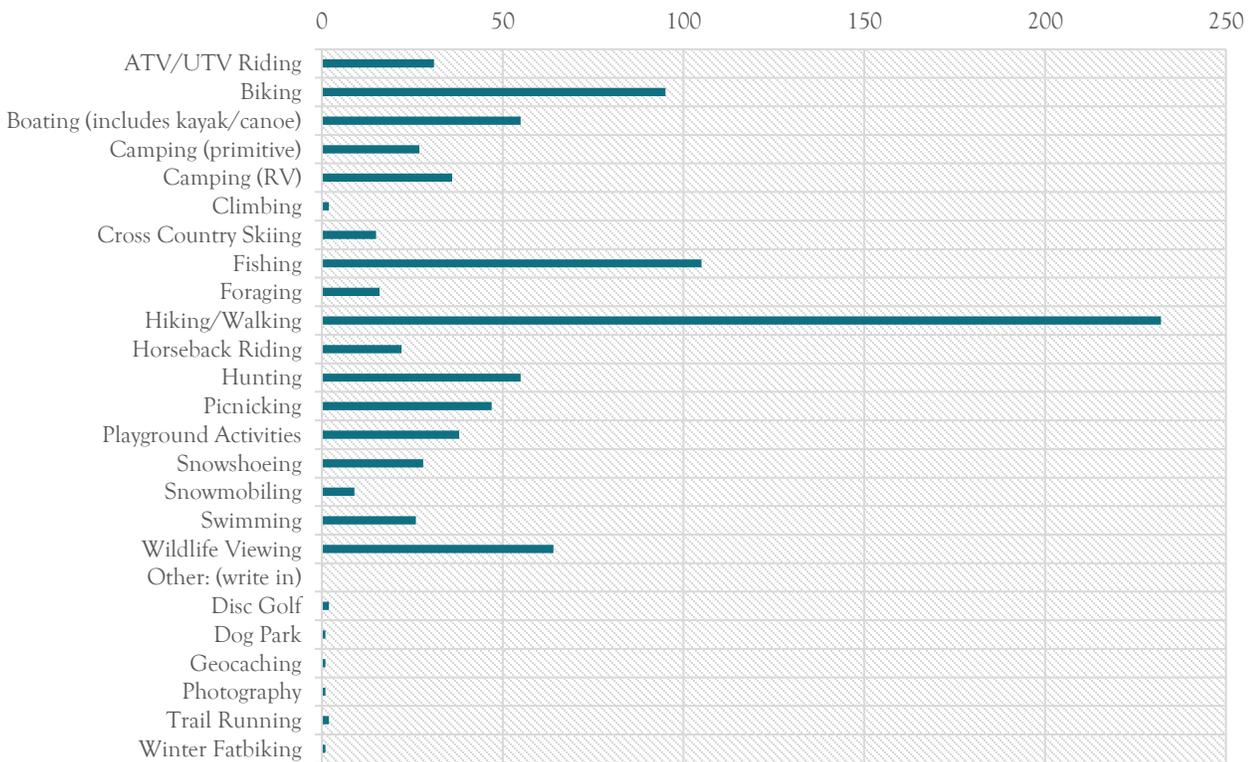
These standards are dependent on the physical and cultural features of a given county. In this Outdoor Recreation Plan, one of the guidelines to be used to determine the adequacy of recreational facilities and areas is the standard of 12 acres per 1,000 people. It has been determined through the planning process that this standard is acceptable to apply in the Vernon County recreational planning process.

## 4. Public Participation

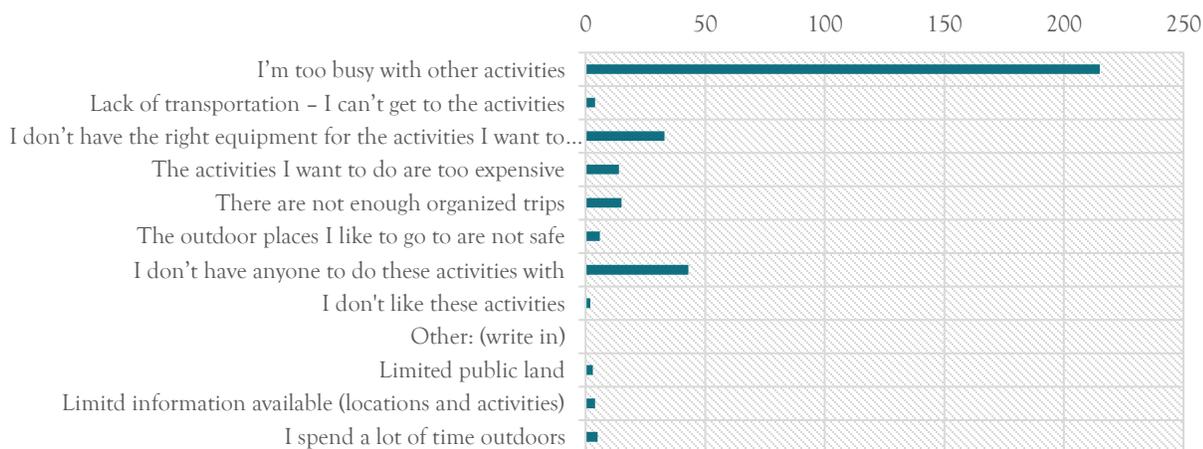
The County prepared a survey during the process of updating its Outdoor Recreation Plan. The survey was made available on the County’s website and shared on social media platforms hosted by Vernon County. A total of 369 responses were received and the results are shown below.



2. What are your top two outdoor recreation activities you participate in in Vernon County?

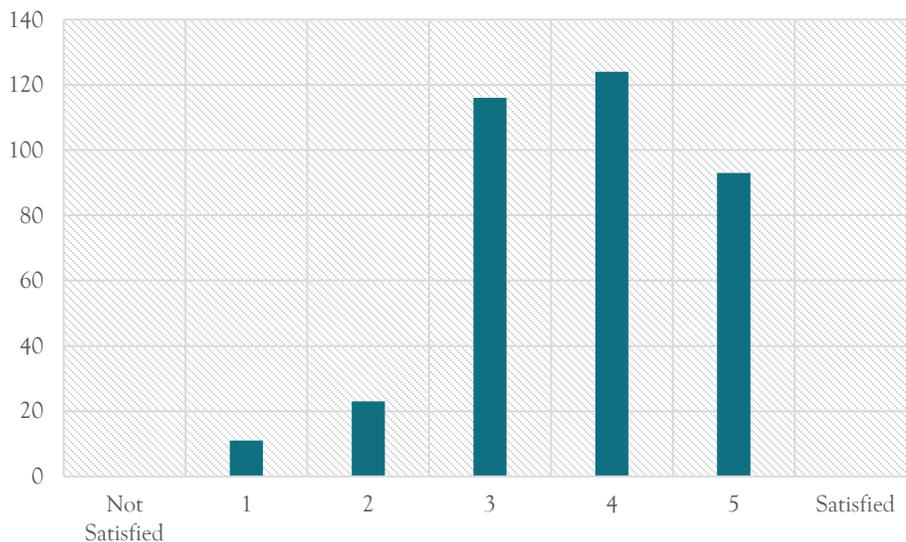


### 3. If you feel you spend too little time in outdoor activities, what keeps you from spending more time?

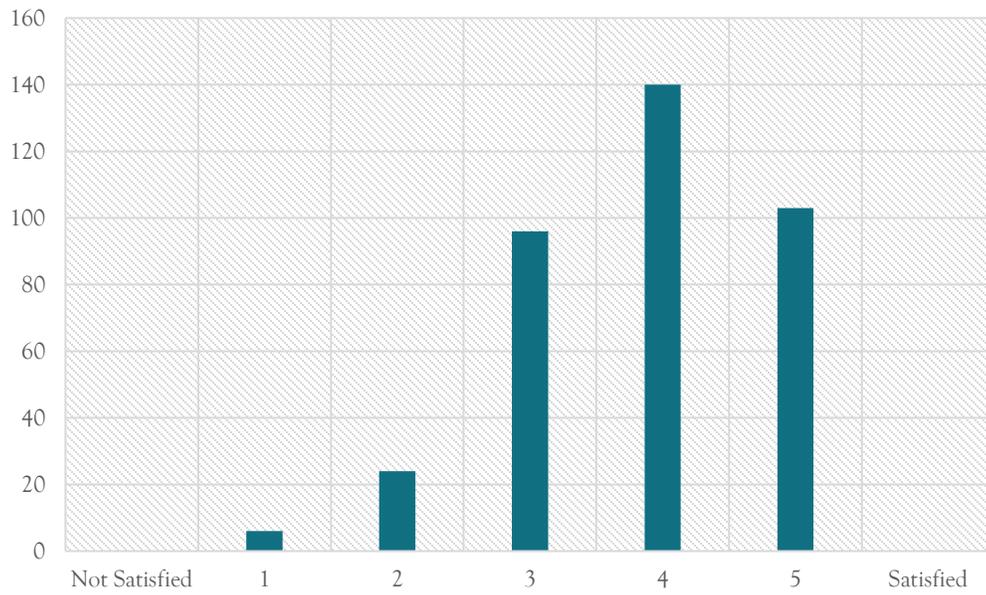


*Please tell us how satisfied you are with the following...*

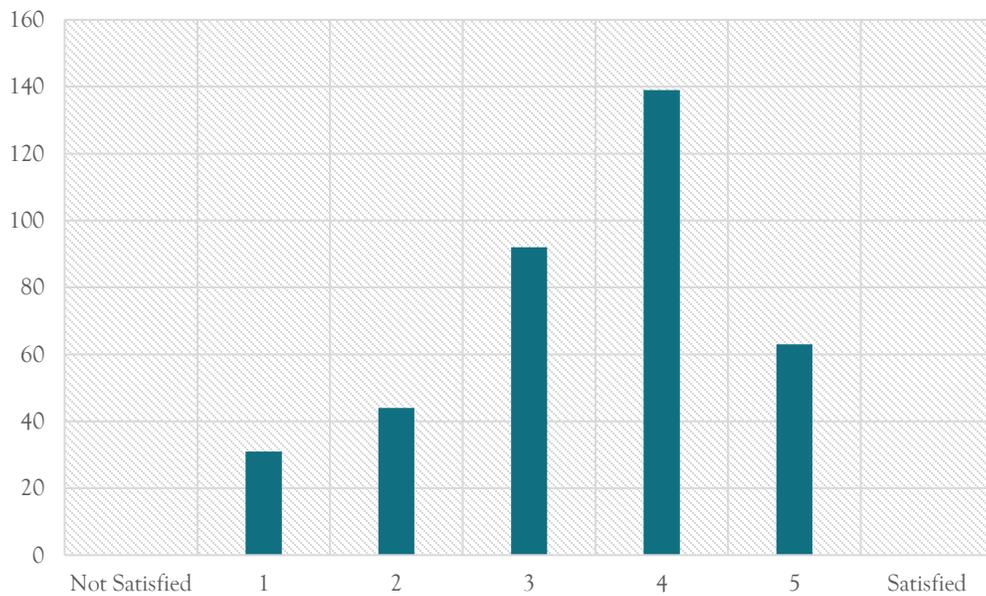
### 4. The number of outdoor parks/facilities available in Vernon County



## 5. The quality of outdoor parks/facilities available



## 6. The maintenance of outdoor parks/facilities



7. Comments on number of, quality of, or maintenance of outdoor parks/facilities available. (*\*not a complete listing of responses*)

*"I love the ones we have, but would never say we have too many!"*

*"I recently acquired a map of the Vernon county parks. We typically head to the most popular ones but decided to branch off and were kind of disappointed. Some of the places for trails didn't even have a trail available as it was overgrown. Signage is also lacking and we didn't know if and where to access some locations. I also wish the map included more over in the eastern part of the county."*

*"It would be really, really helpful to have water available at Sidie Hollow's main pavilion. Sidie needs a new main office badly. Could use a pavilion at Duck Egg. It would also be great to have internet service at Esofea."*

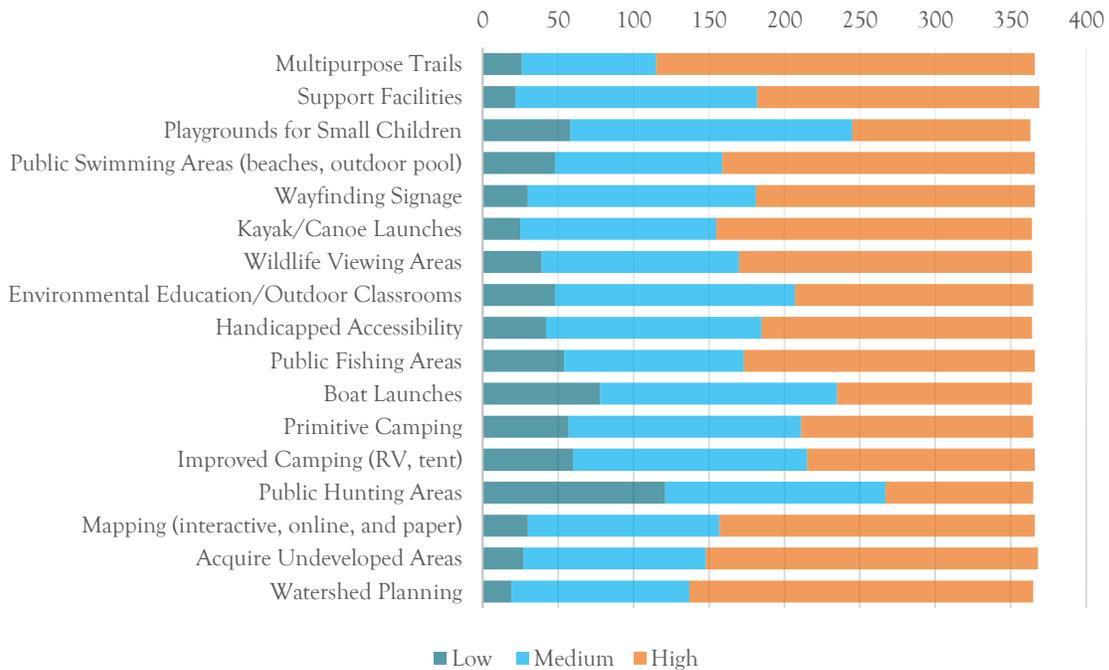
*"Fix Jersey Lake please!!!"*

*"I own a retail business on Main Street in Viroqua, I think the camping is great and a big draw - but I'd like to see more trail access and hiking/biking near town to draw more tourists dollars to our businesses. I am also an avid biker and we should promote and support with tax dollars more mountain biking in our parks - other forward thinking communities and regions are investing in outdoor activities like this and they are drawing huge tourist dollars. We could be a serious Mecca for these types of outdoor activities."*

*"I frequent Duck Egg County Park, and though I will say the trails are generally well maintained, there have been times where issues do not get fixed very quickly (trees down, washed/boggy areas, etc). Perhaps if there was an easy way for people to report issues that would make it easier for maintenance to know what needs attention?"*

*"No more development or infrastructure! Keep parks as wild and natural as possible."*

## 8. Include your priorities for future county/outdoor facility improvements.



## 9. Please comment on any additional high priority items not listed above. (*\*not a complete listing of responses*)

*"Invasive species control/education"*

*"More bike trails and fat tire bike trails in wintertime."*

*"Close the bike trails during deer season"*

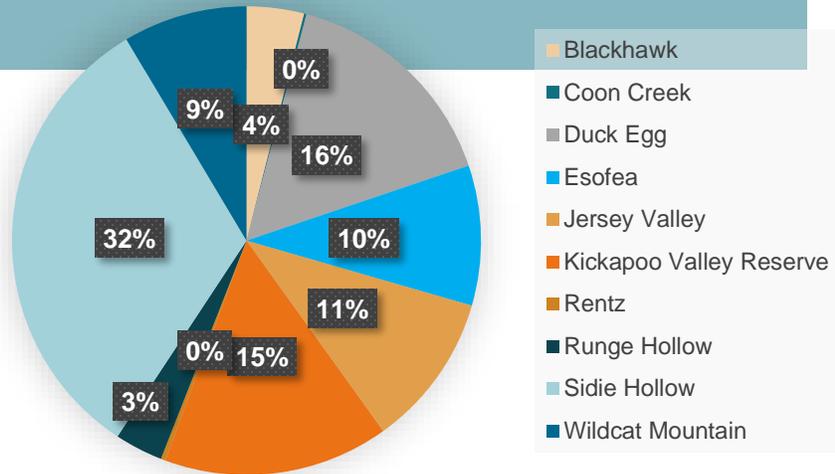
*"sustainable nonmotorized trails, no motorized activities on multi-use trails"*

*"Need more lakes and fix Jersey Lake please!!!"*

*"Off road trails for ATV use"*

*"Keep ATVs out of parks"*

10. Please type your top 3 most visited park or recreation locations in your area



11. If you could create the ideal outdoor recreation experience in Vernon County, what would it be? DREAM BIG! We want your best project ideas. (\*not a complete listing of responses)

*“Manmade lake with big beach and perfect swimming water”*

*“Connected bike trails from community to community and to the greater state trail system. Included in that is kayak and canoeing launches near trail system.”*

*“Jersey Valley would be restored”*

*“I’d love to have a climbing club available where I could rent equipment and learn to climb with an experienced partner! More boat/kayak rentals available at parks.”*

*“An educational kiosk or building with all of the information for enjoying nature in the county parks. Here everyone can gather their information to go on epic adventures that they enjoy: fishing, biking (road or mountain) hiking, kayaking, birdwatching, horseback riding, camping, boating, etc. For me that would be having enough trails to spend an entire day biking, hiking, and having peaceful time in the woods.”*

*“So many! My dream would be that Vernon County is a place where you can come as a tried and true outdoor enthusiast and be challenged and rewarded, but also as an entry level outdoor explorer and feel welcome and encouraged.”*

# 5. County Recreation Facilities and Opportunities

## County Parks and Forest Properties



### AVALANCHE PARK



Avalanche County Park is a 30-acre property acquired in 2017. Centrally located in Vernon County at the intersection of Hwy Y and S. It has .5 miles of mowed trail which leads to the West fork of the Kickapoo River. There is 1,350 ft of river which has abundant amounts of Brown Trout. This property is in the early stages of a native grass buffer along the stream. There are 2 parking spots along with an informational Kiosk with a map of the property.

### BLACKHAWK PARK



Blackhawk Park is a small county-owned property located 2 miles north of the village of DeSoto. The park is 2 acres in size and has 500' of Mississippi River Frontage. There is a public boat launch with trailer parking, a fully stocked store and bait shop, 11 campsites and 37 boat slips that are rented on a seasonal or short-term basis.

Needs/Actions:



Dock replacement, building maintenance and changes, open shelter pavilion for rent

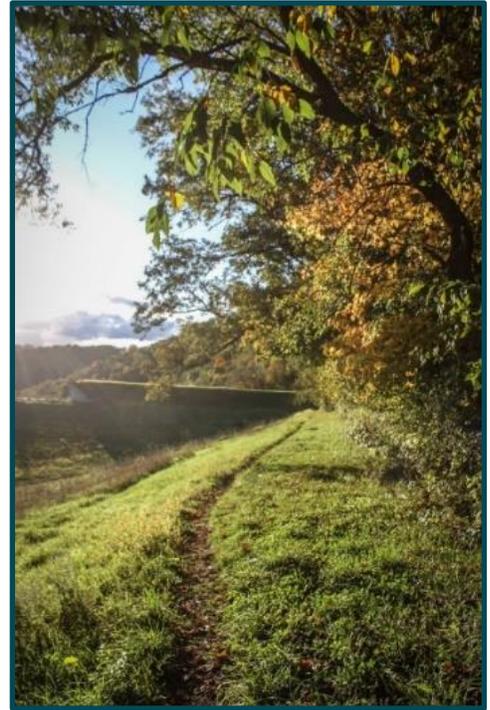
- Estimate: \$80,000-\$120,000

## DUCK EGG COUNTY FOREST



Duck Egg County Forest is a 707-acre county owned, nature-based recreation property located approximately 9 miles west of Viroqua on Irish Ridge Road. The Duck Egg property is bisected by a large, deep valley formed by the Springville Branch of the Bad Axe River. In the center of the valley is an exceptionally large flood control dam structure that was completed in 1990. The dam protects many acres of property and several roads and bridges downstream from the effects of flash flooding, a common occurrence in Vernon County. Duck Egg is open to public fishing and hunting per State of Wisconsin fishing and hunting regulations and seasons. The Springville Branch of the Bad Axe River is a great trout stream. The length of river (about 1.5 miles) downstream of the dam has been improved for trout habitat by the Wisconsin DNR fisheries crew. Upstream of the dam is not improved, but still provides for some excellent trout fishing opportunities.

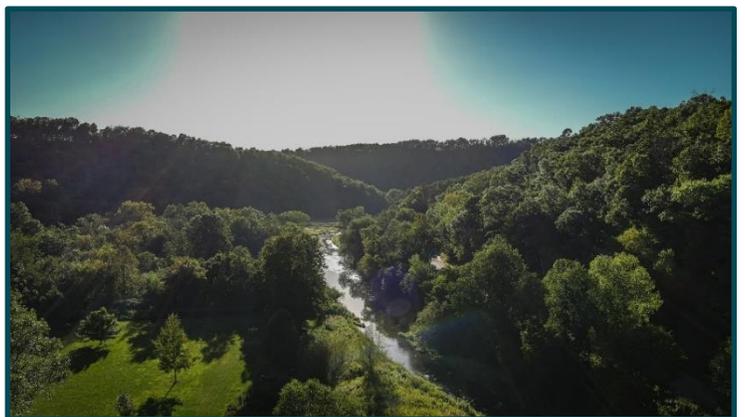
Duck Egg is suitable for hiking and horseback riding, with more than 10 miles of signed and maintained multi-use trail. Hiking is allowed on the horseback riding trail, however, mountain biking is not allowed per the Vernon County Parks Ordinance. ATV's, dirt bikes and other motorized vehicles are NOT allowed on the Duck Egg property under any circumstances.



## ESOFEA/RENTZ MEMORIAL PARK



Esofea/Rentz Memorial Park is Vernon County's oldest and most historic park. Situated on 148 acres in the Town of Jefferson, Esofea Park has 16 rustic sites, 2 electric and water sites, and 10 full hookup RV sites – advance reservations require a two-night minimum. Esofea has more than 3 miles of multi-use trails, a picnic shelter, a spring trout pond (stocked each spring by WI DNR with rainbow trout), large open areas for softball or kickball or volleyball, and a section of the North Fork Bad Axe River running through the property.



The picnic pavilion is a popular location for birthday and graduation parties, family reunions, and the occasional wedding. There is a “kitchen” complete with an oven/range, refrigerator/freezer and a long table that is great for potluck type servings. The pavilion is equipped with picnic tables, benches, and lights. There is a fire ring nearby for evening gatherings.

Needs/Actions:

- Incorporate new playset across from shower house (Estimate: \$30,000-\$60,000)
- Powered sites for Upper Ridge (Estimate: \$90,000-\$110,000)
- Powered sites to Upper Campgrounds out of risk of flooding, 6 sites with 50-amp service and water (Estimate: \$150,000-\$180,000)

**JERSEY VALLEY PARK**



Jersey Valley is a 371-acre county park formed by a flood control dam and manmade lake that was completed in the late 1960’s. Since that time, Jersey Valley Lake has been a popular recreation destination for residents and visitors. In 2018, the Jersey Valley Dam failed when auxiliary spillways could not keep up with the heavy rains. Repairs to this dam are being considered, leaving lake levels, fishing, and recreation opportunities at Jersey Valley paling in comparison to pre-2018 flood conditions. Hunting is open Oct 15<sup>th</sup> through April 15<sup>th</sup>; all state of Wisconsin hunting & fishing regulations and seasons apply. 3.1 miles of hiking trails are available for hiking and biking.



Needs/Actions:

- Trail expansion and future maintenance

**KOORYUMJIAN/LOST CREEK COUNTY FOREST**



Kooyumjian/Lost Creek County Forest is a 120-acre property located about midway between the Vernon County communities of LaFarge and Hillsboro on Pine Avenue off State Hwy 82. There is a fenced parking area with public access for hunting, fishing, and hiking. State of Wisconsin hunting and fishing regulations and seasons apply. There is a trout stream on the property, the upper reaches of the Pine River, that has been improved for habitat. The valley floor is a natural wet prairie grassland with abundant species of native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers.

The Kooyumjian-Lost Creek property was donated to Vernon County on August 26, 2002 by Thomas and Edith Kooyumjian. The Kooyumjian’s desire in donating the property to Vernon County was to provide a site for owners and prospective owners of

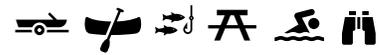


property to get hands-on experience in the various aspects of tree planting, weed control and pruning. They also wanted people to understand the need for sound woodland management. It was the Kooyumjian’s wish to assure the continued management of the forested land and the protection of other natural resources on the property. In their agreement with Vernon County, the Kooyumjian’s specified the property be used for woodland management, education, research, and demonstration.

Needs/Actions:

- Picnic shelter
- Electrical addition for shelter
- Paring lot upgrade
- Trail maintenance and additions

## RUNGE HOLLOW REC. AREA



Most of the land in the Runge Hollow vicinity is private property so visitors are asked to please respect landowners’ rights when recreating in this area. Vernon County has recently executed a recreation easement with the Christianson family. The easement area includes the dam and much of the eastern shore of Runge Hollow Lake. The west and north shores, and the northeast shore remain private land and access is not allowed without permission from the affected landowners. The lake is approximately 44 acres in size, and is home to trout, largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, and perch. An accessible fishing pier is located near the boat launch. Vernon County Parks manages the boat launch and fishing pier. The lake is open to public fishing; however, the surrounding lands are NOT open to public hunting. Motorboats are not allowed – electric trolling motors only please.



## SIDIE HOLLOW COUNTY PARK



Sidie Hollow is a beautiful park with 521 acres, 74 campsites, 2 picnic shelters, and a 38-acre lake. There are two clear and cold-water trout streams, fishing piers, a boat launch, nearly 10 miles of multi-use hiking and mountain bike trails and two playground areas. Sidie Hollow has proven to be a recreation destination for residents and visitors of Vernon County.

Sidie Hollow County Park originated in the 1960’s when Vernon County acquired land for the purpose of building a large flood retention dam designed to protect downstream farms and properties from the devastating effects of flash flooding in the Bad Axe River Valley. Once the dam was completed, the county sold the land back to the State of Wisconsin but retained a permanent recreation easement on the property so that it could be enjoyed as a county park.

Sidie Hollow is a popular campground. There is a mix of rustic tent sites with no utilities, electric sites, and full hookup RV sites ~ advance reservations require a two-night minimum. The streams that feed Sidie Hollow Lake and the lake itself provide great fishing opportunities. Game fish species include brown trout, brook trout, largemouth bass, bluegill, perch, and crappies in abundance. The park is 3 miles from the city of Viroqua, and 30 minutes from the south side of La Crosse.



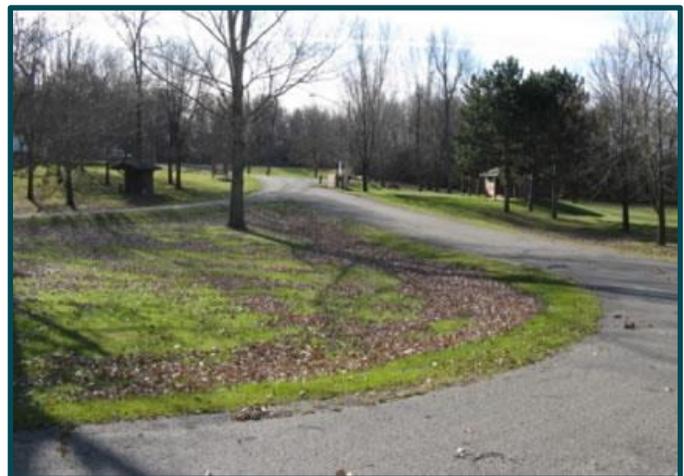
Needs/Actions:

- Replace Upper Sidie old pit toilets with a shower facility and dump stations for RVs (*Estimate \$100,000*)
- New reception building for arriving guests and future store to be run by Friends of Vernon County Parks and Forests group-cold storage in back for park equipment (*Estimate \$85,000-\$100,000*)
- Build cabins or yurts for weekend and weekday rentals (*Estimate \$150,000-\$180,000*)
- Tear down tobacco shed near boat landing and add 3-4 new full hook up sites with 50-amp service- out of the flood zone (*Estimate \$35,000*)
- New swing set with upgrades to existing play area
- Replace dock with concrete dock system to prevent damage and displacement during high water events (*Estimate \$30,000*)
- Dredge Sidie Hollow Lake

**WAYSIDE PARK**



In 2011, Vernon County gained ownership of a county park, called Wayside Park, as part of a four-lane highway expansion project between the communities of Viroqua and Westby. A new multi-use trail, called the Coon Prairie Trail is 10' wide and paved with asphalt. The path connects the communities of Viroqua and Westby, and at the same time provides a place for residents and visitors to recreate and exercise. The path provides transportation choices for people who commute between Viroqua and Westby.



Needs/Actions:

- Create full hook-up campsites (6-10) close to Viroqua with bike trail access (*Estimate \$45,000*)

# OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES BY PARK

AVALANCHE PARK  
 BLACKHAWK PARK  
 DUCK EGG COUNTY FOREST  
 ESOFEA/RENTZ MEMORIAL PARK  
 JERSEY VALLEY PARK  
 KOOYUMJIA/LOST CREEK COUNTY PARK  
 RUNGE HOLLOW RECREATION FOREST  
 SIDIE HOLLOW PARK  
 WAYSIDE PARK

Activity	Avalanche Park	Blackhawk Park	Duck Egg County Forest	Esofea/Rentz Memorial Park	Jersey Valley Park	Kooyumjia/Lost Creek County Park	Runge Hollow Recreation Forest	Sidie Hollow Park	Wayside Park	Icon
BOATING*						✓	✓			
CAMPING (PRIMITIVE)			✓				✓			
CAMPING (RV, TENT)		✓		✓			✓			
CANOEING/KAYAKING	✓					✓	✓			
CROSS COUNTRY SKIING*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
FISHING	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
FORAGING	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
HORSEBACK RIDING			✓							
HUNTING*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
MULTI-USE TRAILS	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
PICNIC AREA	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
PLAYGROUND				✓	✓			✓	✓	
SHOWERS				✓				✓		
SNOWSHOEING*	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
SWIMMING	✓			✓			✓	✓		
WILDLIFE VIEWING	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

\*Boating allowed with electric motors only

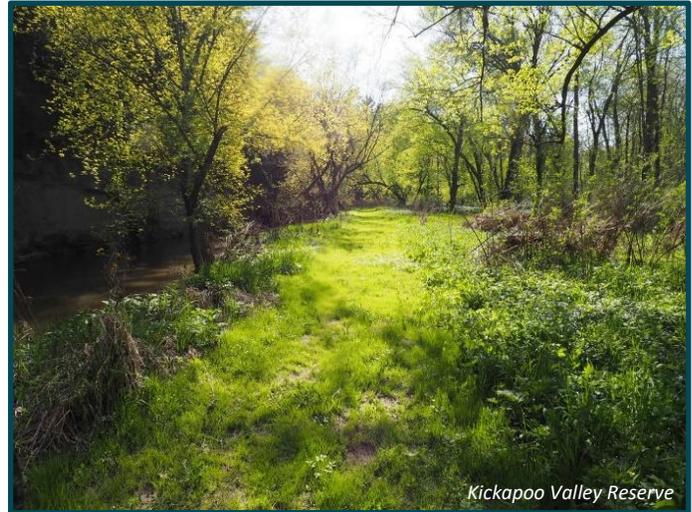
\*Cross country skiing and snowshoeing permitted but no groomed trails

\*Hunting not permitted in County Parks April 15th to October 15th

## Historical and Cultural Sites

### Kickapoo Valley Reserve

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve consists of 8,600 acres between the villages of La Farge and Ontario. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources designated approximate 3,600 acres of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve as State Natural Areas in 2002. The Reserve is on the National Register of Historic Places as over 300 archeological sites have been identified, including burial mounds, petroglyphs, campsites, and dwellings. The partially completed dam and water control tower have been nominated for the National Register due to the correlation the project had with the Environmental Protection Act of 1973, which led to the demise of the proposed dam. The land and natural features within the Reserve have been designated a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service.



*Kickapoo Valley Reserve*

### Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center

This property, owned by a non-profit foundation, is located northeast of Coon Valley, in both Vernon and La Crosse Counties. Norskedalen's goal is to preserve the Scandinavian heritage of western Wisconsin and the Coon Valley area. Authentic rural buildings from area farms settled by Scandinavians have been moved to the Center and a typical farmstead has been recreated. There are numerous marked trails throughout the property. This facility has an authentic farmstead consisting of a house and several barns and outbuildings typical of what Norwegian settlers to the area of Coon Creek built in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The buildings are authentic; saved from



*Norskedalen*

destruction on area farms and relocated to Norskedalen. Costumed interpretive guides staff the farm during certain times over the summer for tours. In addition, the natural history of the area is researched and made available to the public through marked nature trails, interpretive naturalist guides, and a reference library with resources on both the natural and cultural history of the area. Facilities on the property can be rented for events such as wedding and family gatherings.

### Historical

The Vernon County Historic Society maintains four historic building in Viroqua; all are open to the public. The Vernon County Museum is housed in the former Vernon County Normal School. The Genealogical Library and Tourist Information Center reside in the museum. The Sherry-Butt House, built in 1860 by Cyrus Butt, lawyer, Civil War Colonel, politician, and statesman, has been refurbished by the Society. The second owner was Orbec Sherry, a renowned Swiss dairy cattle breeder. A rural one-room school and country church reminiscent of a time now past is also open to the public.

Three buildings within Vernon County are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The County Coon Prairie Church and Cemetery, built in 1858, located in Westby. It was the first Lutheran Church in western Wisconsin and is the “birthplace” of Luther College. Tours are offered by appointment and services are held once per month. The Vernon County Courthouse in Viroqua, built in 1880, is also on the Register. Norskedalen, located on CTH PI between highways 14 and 162 near Coon Valley, houses the 1853 Skumsrud Log Cabin.

Other historical points of interest are the Hillsboro Historical Society’s Hillsboro Museum and Log Cabin in the village park and the African American Settlers Monument at Settlers Park. The Wisconsin Czechoslovakian Museum is also located in Hillsboro. The Westby Area Historical Society provides oral history videos for public viewing through the Bekkum Memorial Library.

Vernon County’s roads also offer a lesson in history. Historical markers are located throughout the County. “The First Watershed Project” is also described west of Coon Valley on Highway 14. “The Battle of Bad Axe” and “Chief Win-no-shik” are explained on Highway 35 north and in De Soto. “Admiral Marc A. Mitscher” is reported on west of Hillsboro on Highway 33 and “Dams on the Mississippi,” on Highway 35 in Genoa. On Highway 14, north of Viroqua, “Governor Rusk” is described. Interested citizens, in cooperation with DOT, have restored the “Blackhawk Trail” historical markers along the roads of the southwest part of the County. In addition, the quaint country stores still in existence along many of the county roads and in some of the smaller villages provide a bit of nostalgia and history to the visitor.

The County is also fortunate to be on the Great River Road’s route. This road, on State Highway 35 following the Mississippi River in Vernon County, provides scenic beauty, historic and national significance, and a cultural heritage to the County’s residents. The Great River Road in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa has been designated a “National Scenic Byway.”

Communities should recognize the scenic and cultural value of architecture. A building need not have been the home of a famous person to warrant preserving, if its architectural style represents a particular era, or adaptation of form to function.

Early Native American sites currently being studied have the potential to provide an educational opportunity for visitors to learn more about the area’s first citizens. Natural areas may never attract as many tourists as water slides or ball games, but tourism is not their primary purpose. The County and communities should support efforts to identify and preserve unique ecologically or cultural features within the County. The Mississippi River National Heritage Corridor Study Committee will help identify features along the Great River Road.

Nature interpretive centers like the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor’s center and historical markers help share these treasures with other residents and the traveling public. The cultural artifacts in the County are cared for, and displayed by the State, Vernon County, and Hillsboro Historical Societies, and Norskedalen, but the areas natural history (its wildlife, geology, and natural resources), are not as well documented or displayed for residents or visitors. Various proposals for establishing a “natural history” oriented museum have come and gone in recent years.

### Cultural

There are several fairs, festivals, and other events in Vernon County which utilize the various community outdoor recreation facilities. The following pages are a schedule of annual events held within Vernon County.

# ANNUAL EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### JANUARY

Winterfest - Kickapoo Valley Reserve & La Farge

Candlelight Hike - Wildcat Mountain State Park

Jiggin' Jamboree, Ice Fishing Tourney - Stoddard

### FEBRUARY

Kids Ice Fishing Day - Genoa Fish Hatchery

International Ski Jump Competition - Westby

Love Stomp, Candlelight Snowshoe Stomp - Viroqua

### MARCH

Spring Fling, Craft Vendor Show - Vernon Vineyards

Conservation Awards & Banquet - Vernon County Land and Water

### APRIL

Stoddard Smelt Fry

City-Wide Garage Sales - Viroqua

Walleye Fishing Tourney - Stoddard

### MAY

Rummage Along the River - Stoddard, Genoa, Victory, De Soto

Tromp & Chomp - Kickapoo Valley Reserve

Kids Spring Fishing Day - Genoa Fish Hatchery

Vernon County Tree Sale - Vernon County Land and Water

Syttende Mai Norwegian Festival - Westby

Westby Syttende Main Bicycle Tours - Vernon Trails

Winding Road Arts Tour - Vernon County

Memorial Day Community Celebrations

### JUNE

Cesky Den Czech Festival - Hillsboro

Music Fest & Canoe Race - Readstown

Vernon County Dairy Breakfast  
[dairydaysofsummer.com](http://dairydaysofsummer.com)

John Cina Pumpkin Ball Tourney - Genoa

Hillsboro Lions Dairy Breakfast

Family Fun Days - Chaseburg

Midsummer Fest - Norskedalen

Viroqua Beer Walk

### JULY

4th of July Community Celebrations

Showdown at Sandford Field - Hillsboro

Driftless Music Festival - Viroqua

Hot Rod Sunday - La Farge

Lorem Ipsum Vintage Motorcycle Rally - Viroqua

Troutfest - Coon Valley

Sweet Rides & Pie Car Show - Westby

Wine Walk in the Vineyard - Vernon Vineyards

### MAY- OCT

Saturday Farmers Market - Viroqua, Ontario, La Farge

# ANNUAL EVENTS

## CALENDAR

### AUGUST

Art on the Farm - Norskedalen

Larryfest - La Farge

Wild West Days - Viroqua

Coon Creek Canoe Races -  
Coon Valley

Hillsboro Charity Tractor Pull

Outdoor Flea Market -  
Readstown

### SEPTEMBER

Labor Day Community  
Celebrations

Tasty Tomato Festival -  
Westby

Pert Near Mountain Bike  
Race - Sidie Hollow

Vernon County Fair -  
Viroqua

Spoon Gathering - Driftless  
Folk School

Horse and Colt Show - Viola

Readstown Steak Supper  
and Drawing

Chaseburg Sole Burner

Retreat Wolds Fair -  
DeSoto/Retreat

### OCTOBER

Fall Fest - Wildcat  
Mountain State Park

Dam Challenge - Kickapoo  
Valley Reserve

Fire Dept Chicken BBQ - De  
Soto

Viroqua Harvest Parade

Civil War Immersion -  
Norskedalen

Shoot the Moon Classic -  
Disc Golf Tourney - VFW,  
Viroqua

Goulees in the Coulees -  
Norskedalen

### NOVEMBER

Winter Wine Walk - Viroqua

Readstown Annual Volunteer  
Fireman's Fundraiser

Sip & Shop Holiday Arts and  
Craft Show - Branches Winery

Twinklesfest Parade - Viroqua

Shop Small Saturday - Vernon  
County

### DECEMBER

Small Town Christmas - La  
Farge

Old Fashioned Christmas -  
Ontario

Holly Jolly Holiday Walk -  
Coon Valley

Holiday Craft & Vendor Fair -  
Vernon Vineyards

### DRIVING TOURS

*Cheyenne Valley Heritage Road Tour*

*Blackhawk Trail Driving Tour*

*Round Barns of Vernon County*

*Ag-Tourism & Local Foods: Farms,  
Businesses, and Restaurants*

## 6. Public and Private Outdoor Recreation Facilities

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### FEDERAL

**Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge** – The full extent of this national refuge, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, extends along both sides of the Mississippi River from Wabasha, MN to Savanna, IL. Within Vernon County the refuge has approximately 6,862 acres. The boat launch ramps along Highway 35 serve as access points to the refuge and about half of the shoreline miles in Vernon County between Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks and the riverbank is federally owned land.

**Blackhawk Park-Corps of Engineers** – The Corps of Engineers is the federal agency that has control of much of the federal land that lies in the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge, but they have leased the land to Fish and Wildlife Service for operation as a wildlife and fish refuge. The Corps has retained direct control over some recreational lands and Blackhawk Park is an example of this type of operation. There is a 96-site campground, toilets, running water, picnic shelters, and boat access ramps, all on a 50-acre site adjacent to the Great River Road north of De Soto. A two-acre county owned parcel of land is located adjacent to the north boundary and provides additional boat ramp capability as well as a concession store for basic food and fishing items.

### STATE

#### **Wildcat Mountain State Park**

This 3,400-acre facility is in northeastern Vernon County off STH 131, 33, and CTH F. The park attracts visitors for hiking, canoeing, horseback riding, photography, and camping. The Kickapoo River runs through the site and is a popular canoe trail. There is also an observation point which overlooks the river.

Two hiking trails (Old Settler's Trail and the Hemlock Nature Trail), 15 miles of horse trails, 7 miles of cross-country ski trails, 3 picnic areas, and 72 campsites are available to the public. 20 cart-in campsites are available off the beaten path. Each site has a fire ring and picnic table. The family campground has 25 rustic sites with



*Wildcat Mountain State Park*

flush toilets, showers, and a dump station. No electrical hookups are available. There are 3 additional group campsites with vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, a shelter house, and water available at the shower or park maintenance building. Two of these sites can hold up to 25 people and one can hold up to 50 people. The horse campground consists of 24 sites with picnic tables, fire rings, drinking water, vault toilets, a corral, hitching posts, parking pads, loading ramps, and a large parking lot.

#### **Kickapoo Valley Reserve**

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) consists of 8,600 acres between the villages of La Farge and Ontario. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources designated approximate 3,600 acres of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve as State Natural Areas in 2002, best reflecting the natural plant and animal communities that occupied the state in the mid-1800s. These areas have seen little human disturbance, thus serving as important resources for biological and genetic diversity. The

Reserve land was originally acquired by the Corps of Engineers in the 1960s for construction of a dam on the Kickapoo River for flood control and recreation purposes. 149 farms were purchased to make way for a dam and reservoir. The landowners were removed, the farm buildings destroyed, and the first phase of construction begun. However, after several starts and stops, the project was halted in 1973 for environmental and economic reasons.

In 1996, federal legislation directed the Corps of Engineers to transfer up to 1,200 acres to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in trust for the Ho-Chunk Nation and the remaining 7,369 acres to the State of Wisconsin. That ownership transfer was completed on December 28, 2000.

State Highway 131 north of La Farge serves the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. In addition, County Highways (CTH) P and F transect the Reserve. The Kickapoo River bisects the Reserve, with significant tributaries including Warner, Billings, and Weister Creeks. The dendritic river system creates unique geological features. The 8,600-acre reserve has 42 miles of boundary. The north boundary is shared with Wildcat Mountain State Park.

The Reserve provides many outdoor recreation opportunities including hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, canoeing, sightseeing, primitive camping (fire rings are the only "improvement" provided), dog training, trapping, dog sledding, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling. In addition, special events are held at the Reserve such as environmental education courses, dog retriever trials, archery shooting courses, and adult seminars. The KVR Visitor Center attracts nearly 20,000 people and 5,000 students come to the building for field trips and special programming. There are approximately

37 miles of horseback riding trails with an additional 15 miles at the adjacent Wildcat Mountain State Park. For the bicycling enthusiasts there are four dedicated mountain bike trails with over 25 miles of paved roads in and around the Reserve. There is an additional network of over 100 miles in the immediate vicinity. The Visitor Center features interactive exhibits on the geology, wildlife, flood history, and economy of the Kickapoo Valley. In addition, guests learn about the unique history of the La Farge Lake and dam project.



The Reserve is managed by the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Management Board. The Kickapoo Valley Reserve Management Board has prepared a Master Plan and Management Plans for the Kickapoo Reserve lands. These plans and other information may be obtained from the Reserve office at S3661 Highway 131 La Farge, WI 54639. The phone number is (608) 625-2690.

## **STATE NATURAL AREAS**

State Natural Areas (SNAs) are areas being preserved by the DNR and its partners to protect outstanding examples of Wisconsin's native landscape. The DNR has designated 402,000 acres of land in Wisconsin as SNA. Not all SNAs are owned by the State. In this region, private landowners and land trust organizations own properties classified as SNAs. Some of these lands are owned and managed by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC). The lands are valuable for research and education use and home to rare plants and animals.



Vernon County has 8 SNAs and most SNAs are open to recreational activities unless otherwise noted and do not require an entrance fee (except Kickapoo Valley Reserve). These include hunting, fishing, trapping, wild edibles, hiking, cross country

skiing, wildlife viewing, scientific research, and outdoor education. Prohibited are camping, horseback riding, rock climbing, motorized vehicles, geocaching, and collecting non-edible plants.

### **Battle Bluff State Natural Area**

This area is part of a 338 acres area located in De Soto with access on Battle Hollow Road. It is a dry prairie with diverse foliage on the Mississippi River west facing bluffs. More than 80 species of native prairie plants have been identified on this site. It has historical interest because it is the site of one of the Black Hawk War battles. It is part of a larger state-owned parcel that is open to the use including hunting and hiking. There are no improved trails or other facilities on the site. It was designated a State Natural Area in 1983.

### **Bergen Bluffs State Natural Area**

This 30-acre parcel is located on a scenic bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in Stoddard off Highway 35. It features a good quality southern oak forest, comprised of large red and white oak. As part of a larger tract of continuous woodlands along the river, the forest is an important stopover site for numerous migratory birds. The natural area provides a high quality "rest area" where birds can stop, rest, and refuel before continuing their migratory journey. Bergen Bluffs is owned by the DNR and was designated a State Natural Area in 2005.

### **Coon Creek Cliffs State Natural Area**

Coon Creek Cliffs is 27 acres located in Coon Valley with access on Coulee Ridge Road. This parcel features a long series of large north facing sandstone cliffs, many of which are dripping wet, and supporting a large population of rare plants. This area was designated a State Natural Area in 1986.

Eagle Eye State Natural Area

Eagle Eye is 70 acres on Upper Newton Road in Viroqua along the North Fork of the Bad Axe River, a Class II trout stream. The site gets its name from a narrow, horizontal slit in a bedrock outcrop at the summit of a curving ridge, 250' above the floodplain. Although the ecological values of this site are noteworthy, seven Native American effigy mounds are found on the south-facing flank of the ridge. This area was designated a State Natural Area in 2016.

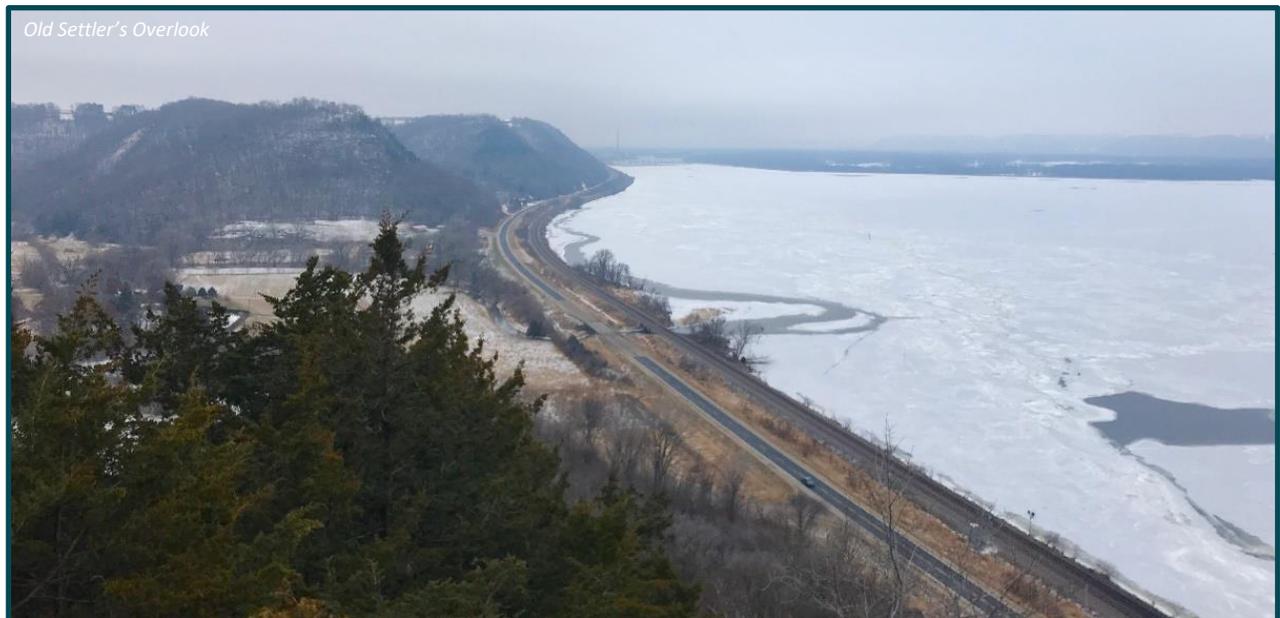


Mt. Pisgah Hemlock-Hardwoods State Natural Area

This site is 74 acres located in Wildcat Mountain State Park designated as SNA. It contains a relic northern forest of hemlock, yellow birch, white pine, and the river cliffs harbor several rare plant species. It was designated State Natural Area in 1952.

Old Settler's Overlook

Old Settler's Overlook, a 45-acre wayside park atop the bluffs between Stoddard and Genoa, has stunning views of the Mississippi river, plus places to picnic and a couple of short hiking trails. Access the park from Spring Coulee Road off Wisconsin Great River Road Highway 35.



### Romance Prairie State Natural Area

This site is 77 acres located in Genoa off Highway 56. It features a dry prairie situated on a steep southwest-facing slope overlooking the town of Romance. The thin rock soil supports an excellent variety of dry prairie species. It was designated a State Natural Area in 2005.

### Romance Woods

Romance Woods includes 35-acre property owned by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC), northeast of Romance Prairie State Natural Area. The land supports healthy populations of white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and other wildlife available to provide hunting and trapping opportunities for the public. A former logging road runs the length of the property, providing an excellent trail for public use for hiking, bird watching, and snowshoeing. The property also provides refuge for numerous non-game species such as Neotropical migratory birds, and other native animal and plant species. Refer to the general use policies provided by MVC when accessing these lands:

<https://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/resources/policies>

### Tunnelville Cliffs State Natural Area

Tunnelville Cliffs is 150 acres located in La Farge on Tunnelville Road. The land features an extensive series of east-facing Cambria sandstone cliffs including a state-threatened plant species. Situated above the East Branch of the Kickapoo River, the cliffs are shaded by a mixed forest of large white pine, red oak, yellow birch, basswood, sugar maple, paper birch, and ironwood. Seepages can be found along the cliff bases. There are also ice caves, waterfalls, and a small goat prairie. Tunnelville Cliffs is owned by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy (MVC)



and was designated a State Natural Area in 2006. Refer to the general use policies provided by MVC when accessing these lands:

<https://www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org/resources/policies>

## **PUBLIC ACCESS LANDS**

### Hunting and Fishing Areas

There are several state-owned areas in Vernon County, totally approximately 965 acres which have been purchased by or given to the DNR for hunting and fishing access, water level control, or for scientific or natural area preservation. All these sites are open to the public, including hunting and fishing, but there are a few amenities in the way of marked trails or toilets and drinking water. The following is a list of these sites by Town:

Christiana:

- Timber Coulee (48 acres) upland timber and trout stream

Coon:

- Coon Creek Fisheries Area (190 acres) upland timber and trout stream
- Spring Coulee Fisheries Area (51 acres) upland timber and trout stream

Franklin:

- Tainter Creek Fisheries Area (133 acres) upland timber and trout stream

Sterling and Harmony:

- Purdy Tract (98 acres) scattered upland forest, primarily deer habitat
- Hornby Creek Tract (192 acres) upland timber and trout stream, with some active field cropping

Union:

- Champion Valley Stewardship Forest (54 acres) upland forest mixed

Wheatland:

- Battle Island (62 acres) bottomland habitat, used for water level management
- Battle Bluff (30 acres) xeric bluff prairie, SNA
- Battle Hollow (155 acres) upland timber and trout stream, SNA



Future plans for these State parcels include active management to maintain a prairie habitat on Battle Bluff, wildlife habitat improvements on all parcels, and a continuing acquisition program as willing buyers present properties for sale within the designated project areas. Map 12 shows trout streams by class in Vernon County.

Check out the interactive County Fishing Easement Web/Mobile App for fishing, hunting, and water sports locations!



Union Center to Hillsboro Bicycle Trail

This 4.5-mile screened limestone trail is the former right-of-way of the Hillsboro and Northeastern Railroad. When the Chicago and Northwestern Railway line between Reedsburg and Union Center ceased operating, the H & NE had no links to the rest of the nation's rail system, so it too had to cease. The right-of-way is owned by the State and operated and maintained by a coalition of Juneau and Vernon Counties and the City of Hillsboro. It is open to cross-country skiing and snowmobiling in the winter. It provides access to bank side fishing areas of the West Branch of the Baraboo River.

Snowmobile and Equestrian Trails

Vernon County has about 225 miles of snowmobile trails that are maintained by the seven snowmobile club alliance in the County. The clubs are: Chaseburg Snowtrailers, Coulee Track-N-Trail, Viroqua Ridge Runners, Ocooch Mountain Trail Riders, Kickapoo Valley Riders, Inc., Hillsboro Trailblazers, and Mt. Tabor Moonlight Riders. The Vernon County Parks Administrator is the coordinator with the clubs. Each club sets up the trail routes, gets permission from the private landowners and does the marking of the trails. The State pays \$250.00 per mile of trail for the upkeep and the grooming of the trails. This money comes from snowmobile registration fees

## Vernon Trails

Vernon Trails is a non-profit organization committed to developing and maintaining roadways, sustainable trails, and outdoor recreational opportunities for human powered users. It is a 100% volunteer run organization where proceeds go directly to creating outdoor opportunities for the residents of Vernon County. In the past 14 years Vernon trails has opened over 50 miles of shared use trails in Vernon County on both Public land like the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Sidie Hollow, and Jersey Valley and Private lands and on private lands like Davidson Park, Rusty Ridge and Hubbard Hills. Vernon Trails has organized 100's of events for residents of Vernon County including the Viroqua Community Bike Ride, Syttende Mai Bike Tour, Dairy Roubiax Gravel Grinder, and Love Stomp Snowshoe Event. The organization has created youth opportunities like the Nordic Ski Program, Camp Bluedog (a mountain bike camp for kids), and a youth mountain bike team.





## 7. Planning Initiatives and Funding Opportunities

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The following section outlines Vernon County planning initiatives that align with section 1 goals and objectives. It also expands on the needs and actions listed in section 6 by park. Tailing the planning initiatives is an inclusive but not exhaustive list of funding opportunities for recreational development and maintenance activities.

***The following improvements are planned for Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Facilities.***

### **High Priority Actions**

- Improve access to all the watersheds and navigable streams for recreational boaters and canoers/kayakers. Construction of developed boat ramps and landings with parking access for motorized boats and for canoes/kayaks could include signs, maps, and parking.
- Provide and promote public fishing opportunities on public waters. Provide access to the Vernon County watersheds, fishable ponds, and the Mississippi River and backwater areas. Proposed improvements would include land acquisition, parking areas, boat landings, shore fishing opportunities, ice fishing, signs, and maps.
- Provide and promote public trout stream fishing opportunities on local trout streams. Proposed improvements would include easements and/or land acquisition, parking areas, trout stream habitat restoration projects, signs, and maps.
- Campsite expansion in non-flood prone areas. Addition of facilities for full hook-up camping and bathroom buildings with showers.

### **Medium Priority Actions**

- Acquire land for public and trail development (Biking, Hiking, and Multi-Use Trails)
- Repair and replace parks equipment. Addition of parks playgrounds that are accessible for everyone.
- Continue to improve and maintain existing snowmobile and ATV motorized trail routes to increase safety, post signs, construct bridges, provide access and/or parking, develop maps, and maintenance of vegetation management. Upgrade trails with bridge crossings across waterways and wetlands.
- New building for Parks department to greet visitors and campers. This will be a building with County Parks information and also a place that will house all parks maintenance equipment.
- Develop and maintain permeant stay cabins and yurts at county parks for weekly stays for all seasons to help promote fall, winter and spring actives within the county parks.

### **Low Priority Actions**

- Continue to explore opportunities to develop County and local parks for public use. Sites could include: Picnic grounds, campgrounds, other recreational sporting parks, water access parks, trail access, beaches, Historic sites, performing arts stage.
- Develop new and continue to maintain existing cross-country ski trails with good partnership efforts. Trails require maintenance in off seasons to trim back overgrown branches, and winter to continually groom trails with appropriate tracked equipment for both skate skiing and classic skiing tracks.
- County Parks Docks - Adding to docks at Blackhawk Park for more seasonal boat slips. New boat dock for public boat landing at Blackhawk County Park. New docks at county parks that are less prone to being damaged during a flood event. Addition of 2 boat landing docks made of concrete that will with stand flooding.
- Kayak and canoe landing and rental facility at Sidie Hollow Lake. Seasonal kayak and canoe storage for local people to have a place to leave them long term.

- Continue to improve and maintain existing snowmobile and ATV motorized trail routes to increase safety, post signs, construct bridges, provide access and/or parking, develop maps, and maintenance of vegetation management. Upgrade trails with bridge crossings across waterways and wetlands.

## **RELATED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATION PLANS**

### **Friends of Vernon County Parks and Forests:**

#### **Projects and Initiatives Within County-Owned Parks and Forests:**

- Increase maps and trail signage
- Increase public utilization of parks and promote tourism by:
  - Cultivating an active social media presence
  - Hosting organized events and workdays to provide structured opportunities for participants to become familiar with the parks spaces (outdoor concerts, yoga sessions, tree-planting, winter hikes etc.)
  - Merchandising that enhances Vernon County parks' public profile (trail-map bandanas, t-shirts, stickers, etc.)
- Improved trail maintenance to help ensure trail accessibility throughout the year
- Trail network expansion
- Habitat conservation, e.g.:
  - Stream water quality
  - Invasive species management (both terrestrial and aquatic)
  - Tree planting
  - Clean-up days
- Facilities enhancements (fishing piers, accessibility for persons with disabilities, etc.)
- Jersey Valley dam restoration to help regain access to water sports on county-owned properties
- Advocate for policies on the local and state level that promote conservation and access to natural spaces

### **Kickapoo Valley Reserve**

#### **Projects and Initiatives:**

- Redesign the interactive exhibits in the KVR Visitor Center
- Open a Forest Charter School (planned 2021) with the La Farge School District
- Install a river access site near La Farge with improved features to support issues related to aging or disabilities
- Work with the Monroe County Climate Change Task Force to improve monitoring and alerts for flood forecasting in the Kickapoo Watershed
- Work with UW Madison to demonstrate upland practices that minimize flood damage and danger to recreationists and the trails they enjoy
- Highlight outdoor recreation opportunities year-round;
  - Winter – guided hikes to ice formations, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, fat tire biking
  - Spring – bird watching, spring ephemerals, turkey hunting, trout fishing
  - Summer – all outdoor activities
  - Fall – trail riding, leaf peeping, hunting, foraging, etc.
- Support and create special events like the Dam Challenge Triathlon, guided hikes, and tours for all ages

## **Mississippi Valley Conservancy**

### Projects and Initiatives:

- Native habitat restoration
- Invasive species removal
- Improve signage
- Encourage people to use MVC lands for outdoor classrooms

## **Vernon County Economic Development Strategy**

### Projects and Initiatives:

- Tourism is a targeted industry cluster for expansion: with focus on Outdoor Recreation.
- There is a strong tourism industry in the Driftless Area. Much focus on outdoor recreation/activities and the scenic qualities of the area. The strategy states that there is a great deal of potential to expand the promotion of outdoor recreation to reach a larger market. This sector holds promise to bring new revenue to the county's local retail, dining establishments and lodging businesses helping to revitalize business districts and increase sales tax collections
- Prepare a regional tourism plan that enhances visitation and spending
- Tourism is one of the three primary industry clusters found within Vernon County and the region. Vernon County will advocate for expanded and improved efforts to understand the market potential and development needs that will result in an increase in visitors, longer stays, and increased spending
- Conduct a marketing and public relations campaign
- Vernon County will undertake a broader marketing and public relations campaign to enhance its recognition and reputation as a dynamic and innovative rural community. Raising its profile, statewide and regionally, will help to attract visitors, new residents, and investment.

Economic Development Strategy Vernon County, Wisconsin - Adopted by Vernon County Board July of 2018

## **Vernon County 15 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan**

### Projects and Initiatives:

- Maintain current facilities and develop additional facilities
- Maintain existing water access points
- Enforcement needs:
  - Cameras or extra summer help to enforce fees, vandalism, or otherwise
- Staff needs:
  - Seasonal or fulltime staff for maintenance of campgrounds, train systems, and amenities
- Campgrounds:
  - Development of new full hookup sites as well as new facilities to account for increased use
- Parks:
  - New recreational use areas for all recreationalist, acquisitions, campgrounds, and otherwise
- Trails:
  - New trails designated for both recreational use and utilitarian use such as access or logging may be needed

## **Vernon County Land and Water Resource Management Plan**

### Projects and Initiatives:

- Work to provide Vernon County citizens and visitors with increased access to recreational opportunities to give them a richer outdoor experience while protecting and restoring valuable ecosystems
- Establish a more efficient fee collection system

- Expand the camping self-registration system, donation system, and other fee collection (as needed) throughout the County Parks
- Secure funds for parks improvements
  - Expand camping areas as is feasible, improve/maintain existing facilities, dredging as needed, etc.
- Develop and maintain swimming beaches throughout the County
  - Improve swimming beaches at Jersey Valley and develop swimming area at Sidie Hollow
- Manage campgrounds on County properties
  - Continue (and expand as feasible) management of campsites at County Park properties
- Oversee Blackhawk Park County Property and Boat Landing
  - Administer lease and maintain boat landing area
- Manage the Multi-Use Trail Park between Westby and Viroqua
  - Operate, maintain, and improve the park facilities at the wayside along the MUT trail
- Implement outdoor/environmental education opportunities at County Parks
  - Park improvement projects and educational programs as they arise
- Work with the Vernon County Friends of Group to help host events and fundraising
  - Utilize the new Friends of Vernon County Parks group to work with them on events and fundraising goals for the parks and forests
- Increase cooperation between partners to expand and improve recreation opportunities in the County
  - Continue to seek grants to improve habitat work on both County and State lands
- Increase public access to good quality streams and land to increase recreational opportunities throughout the County
  - Continue to take 20/20-year County fishing easements. Purchase additional land adjacent to County land when it becomes available
- Maintain/Repair County easement areas
  - As needed, habitat work is found in need of repair on County easements and funds will be secured to assist landowners with those repairs
- Promote hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities in the County to ensure long-term viability of these recreational opportunities
  - Allow public hunting, fishing, and trapping at designated times in County Parks
- Practice sustainable forestry on County Forest land
  - Mark, bid out, and administer timber sales on County Forest properties
- Acquire contiguous County Forest lands
  - As the opportunity arises, coordinate acquisition of additional land for inclusion in the County Forest program

### **Vernon County Land Information Plan**

#### Projects and Initiatives:

- Participate in a multi-county LiDAR acquisition project (planned for 2020)
  - Important for recreational trail development and maintenance, water runoff and erosion modeling, identifying safety hazards
- Develop several public facing and internal web map applications using Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS
  - Planned but not limited to applications for County parks and recreation, emergency response and damage inspection, road signs maintained by the County
- Perform watershed modeling
  - Focus on identifying high priority areas for additional conservation and flood mitigation practices

- Develop disaster/flood damage mapping
- Develop County park/forest trails data
- Maintain annual software licensing and support with ESRI software for mapping of County lands and public access to these maps
- Support and fund the Land Information Office staff positions for salary, retirement benefits, and health insurance costs

## **Vernon Trails**

### Projects and Initiatives:

- Trail expansion on public and private lands
- Expansion of fat biking trail network at the VFW
- Signage and mapping for all projects
- Creation of a Vernon Trails Adventure Map
  - Create new road cycling routes
  - Feature off road adventures on the map
- Create a pump track
- Promotion/Marketing Focus:
  - Promotion of Disc Golf as a destination
  - Active Marketing of Winter Sports
    - Snowshoeing
    - Fat Biking
    - Nordic Skiing
- VTAC – Vernon Trails Area Composite Mountain Bike Team
  - Continue to work with Vernon County Schools to recruit and grow this team sport
- Cycling infrastructure
  - Bike lanes in the City
  - Safe route to schools
  - Connection to Coon Prairie
- Comprehensive Trail Development Plan
  - Essential to big funding and donor potential
  - Volunteer enthusiasm surrounding a comprehensive plan
  - Essential for land stakeholders
- Create a “pay to play” model for trail users
  - If not a part of local budgets, trails need to be funded and exploring on both public and private lands the best way to implement
- Continue with maintaining and creating events that add value and meaning to the communities we serve

## **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

Funding Programs Funding for recreational development can come from several sources both public and private. Most funding for this type of development comes from public local funds. Primarily, local funds come from a number of sources including the sale of bonds, allocations from the local tax base, and donations from individuals and organizations. Non-local funding can come from a number of sources, either in the form of a grant or a loan. Currently, the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Rural Development (RDA) provide competitive funding relating to outdoor recreation.

The Wisconsin Waterways Commission is a good source of funding for acquiring and improving those amenities that primarily benefit recreational boaters in the state. Boat ramps, launches, parking lots, restrooms, and other boating related improvements can be 50% funded under this quarterly grant program administered by the WDNR.

### **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is a main source of funding for outdoor recreation facilities. The Stewardship Program, administered by the DNR, is a fund designed to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, protect land sensitive to environmental degradation, conserve and restore wildlife habitat and protect water quality. As a prerequisite to the following WDNR funding programs, applicants must first submit a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, such as this plan, or a master plan that has been approved by resolution by a local governing unit, or a plan of a higher unit of government. Applicants submitting qualifying comprehensive outdoor recreation plans or master plans may receive eligibility to apply for funding for up to five years. The DNR's priority for funding is land acquisition, followed by facility development. Outdoor recreation grant programs currently administered by the DNR include:

*All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Program* provides funds to accommodate all-terrain vehicles through the acquisition, insurance, development, and maintenance of all-terrain vehicle trails and areas, including routes.

*ATV Enforcement Patrol:* provides grants to county sheriffs for all-terrain vehicle patrols.

*County Conservation Aids:* provides funds to counties or recognized Indian tribes to carry out fish or wildlife management projects that enhance fish and wildlife habitat or fishing and hunting opportunities.

*Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration:* provides funding for sport fish restoration and boating access including the construction of boat landings and fishing piers.

*Recreational Boating Facilities Program:* provides funds to local units of government and qualified lake associations for the construction of capital improvements to provide safe recreational boating facilities. The program also provides financial assistance for feasibility studies related to the development of safe recreational boating facilities, purchase of aquatic weed harvesting equipment, purchase of navigation aids, dredging of channels of waterways, and chemical treatment of Eurasian water milfoil.

### ***Did You Know?***

OutWiGo is a statewide initiative encouraging people to improve their overall health and wellness by being active in the outdoors.

Since launching in May 2018, over 2,000 residents have pledged to be active in Wisconsin's Parks, Forests and Trails. OutWiGo aims to reach additional users through outreach, partnership events and social media marketing.

Learn more at:  
<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/outwigo.html>

The logo for OutWiGo features the word "OutWiGo" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "O" is a green circle containing a white silhouette of a tree. The "i" is a blue lowercase letter. The "W" is a green uppercase letter. The "G" is a blue uppercase letter. The "o" is a green lowercase letter.

*Recreational Trails Program:* provides funds for motorized and non-motorized recreation trail rehabilitation, trail maintenance, trail development, and trail acquisition.

*Snowmobile Trail Aids:* provide funds to maintain trail systems that provide passage through a county and connections with adjacent counties.

*County Snowmobile Enforcement Patrols:* provide funds for county snowmobile patrols functioning as a law enforcement unit for the enforcement of Ch. 350, Wis. Stats.

*Stewardship Local Assistance - Acquisition and Development of Local Parks Stewardship:* provides funding to acquire land, rights in land, and develop public outdoor recreation areas for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes.

*Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Rivers Stewardship Local Assistance:* provides funds for the acquisition of land in urban areas. Projects focus on providing access for the greatest number of potential users and providing the greatest opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation.

*Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Greenspace Stewardship Local Assistance:* provides funds for the acquisition of land in and around urban areas. Projects focus on providing access for the greatest number of potential users and providing the greatest opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation.

*Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):* provides financial assistance to state agencies, counties, villages, towns, school districts, cities, and Indian tribes for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program provides up to 50 percent reimbursement grants for approved state and local projects. Competition for LWCF funds is on a statewide basis.

#### Rural Development Administration (USDA - Rural Development)

The USDA provides a loan program, which provides Community Facility Project Loans to applicants with areas of less than 20,000 people, for the purpose of constructing, enlarging, or improving community facilities for health care, public safety, or public services. These loans should be secured with bonds or notes pledging taxes, assessments, or revenues.

There are many Rural Development program that are different areas of community development that could provide loans, or possibly grants, if criteria are met for income and utility rates, for facilities in the communities that are smaller in size. 59 Coastal Management Program, Department of Administration

#### Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) Wisconsin Department of Transportation

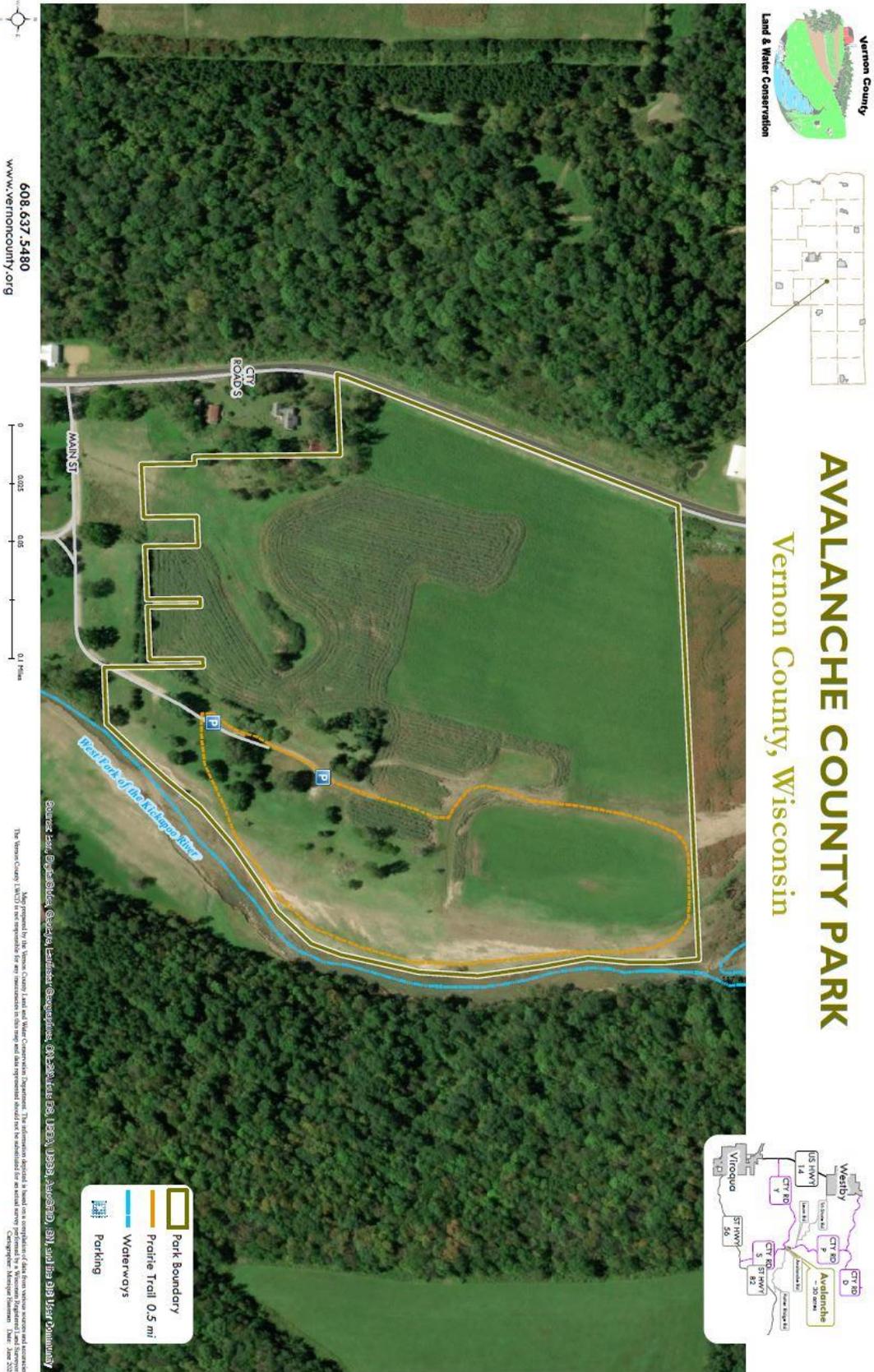
This program provides funds for non-traditional projects within programs called the Safe Routes to School Program, Transportation Enhancements, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program. The TAP program provides up to 80 percent reimbursement grants for approved projects that target transportation-oriented pedestrian and bicycle planning and construction projects.

#### Community Development Block Grant, Department of Administration

This program funds support infrastructure and facility projects for communities. Examples of eligible projects include improvements, repairs, or expansions of streets, drainage systems, water and sewer systems, sidewalks, and community centers.



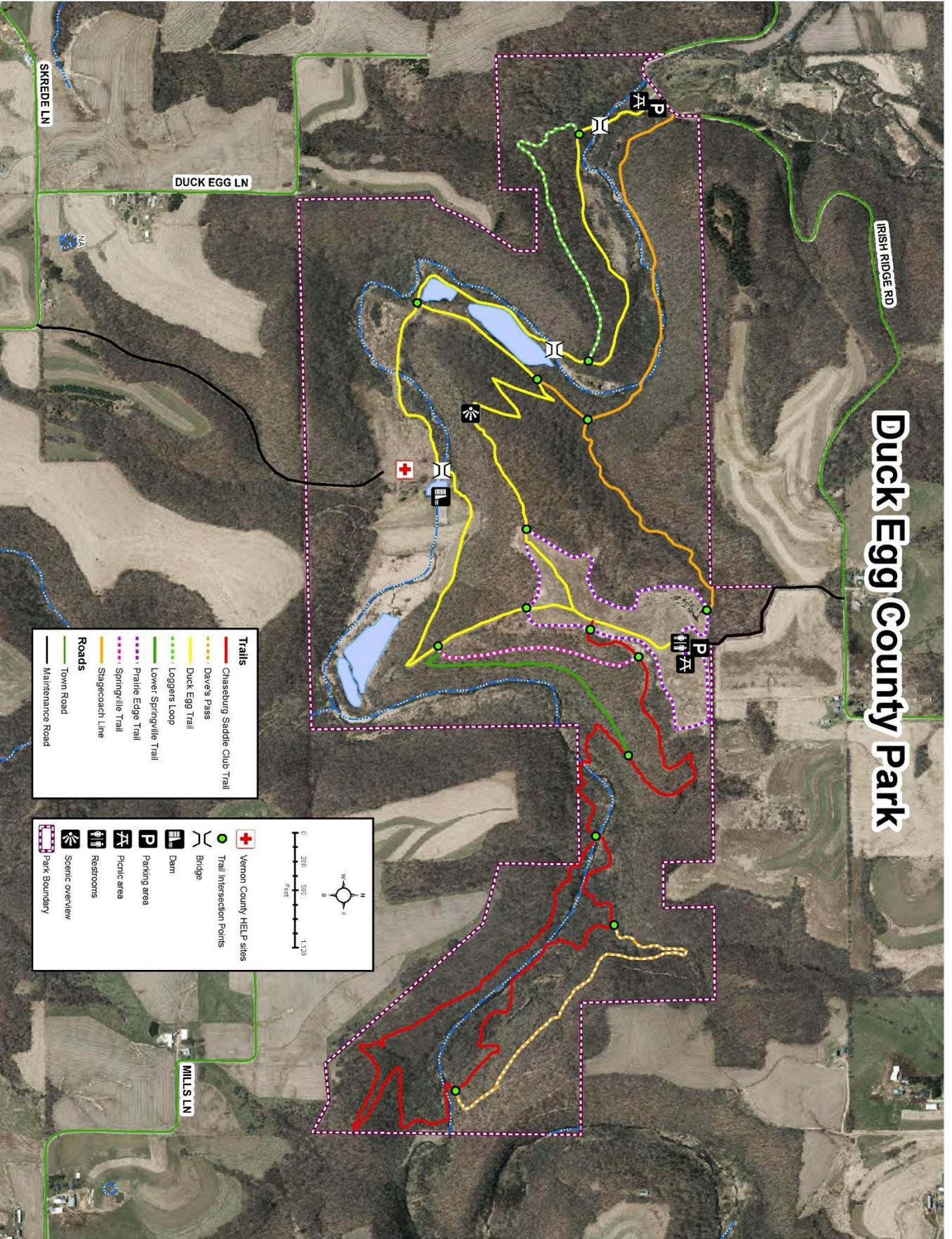
Map 1 Avalanche County Park



# 8. Maps



# Duck Egg County Park



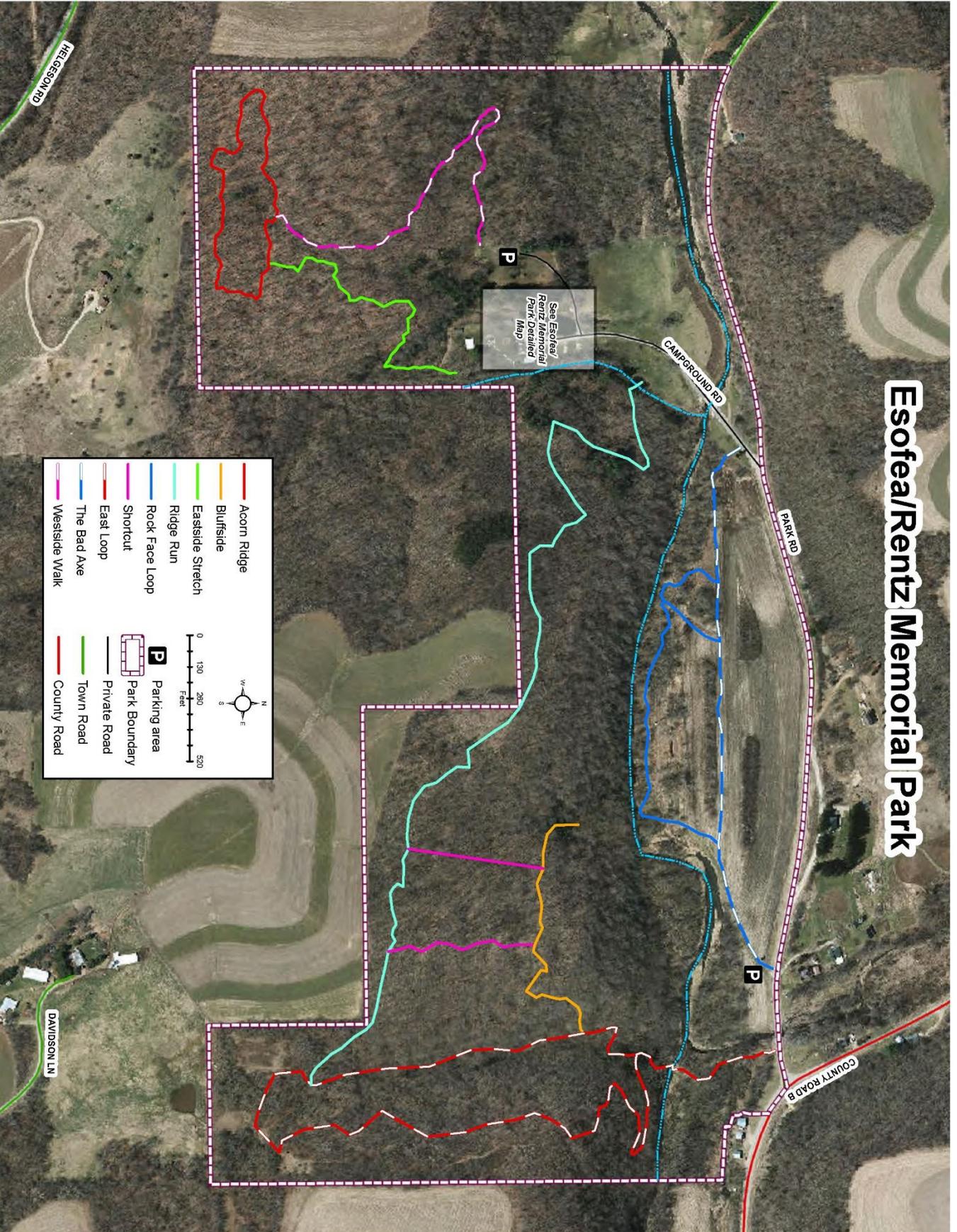
- Trails**
- Chaseburg Saddle Club Trail
  - Dave's Pass
  - Duck Egg Trail
  - Loggers Loop
  - Lower Springville Trail
  - Prairie Edge Trail
  - Springville Trail
  - Stagecoach Line
- Roads**
- Town Road
  - Maintenance Road

+ Vernon County HELIP sites  
● Trail Intersection Points  
⌒ Bridge  
⌒ Dam  
P Parking area  
⌒ Picnic area  
♿ Restrooms  
🌄 Scenic overlook  
⬠ Park Boundary

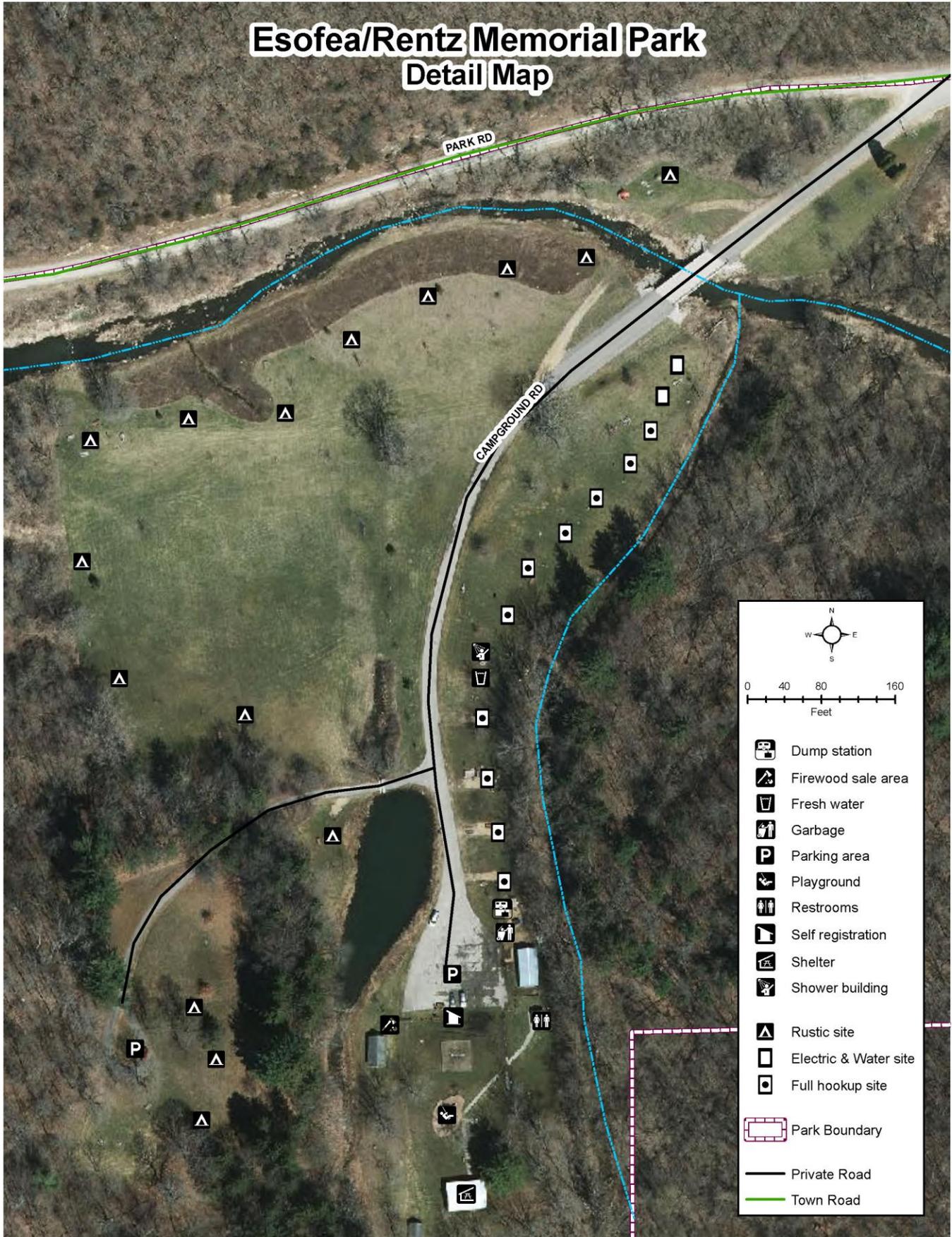
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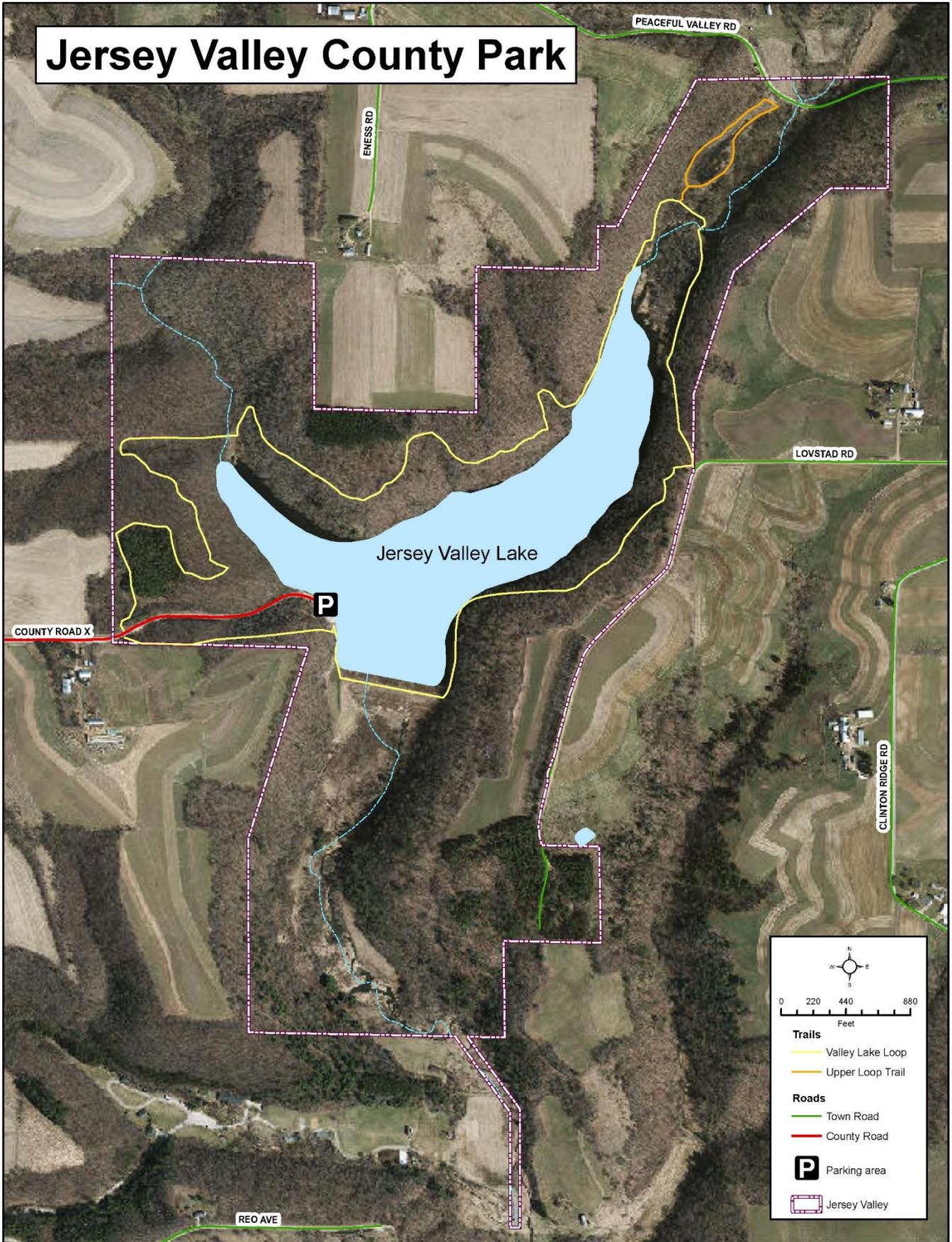
# Esfoea/Rentz Memorial Park



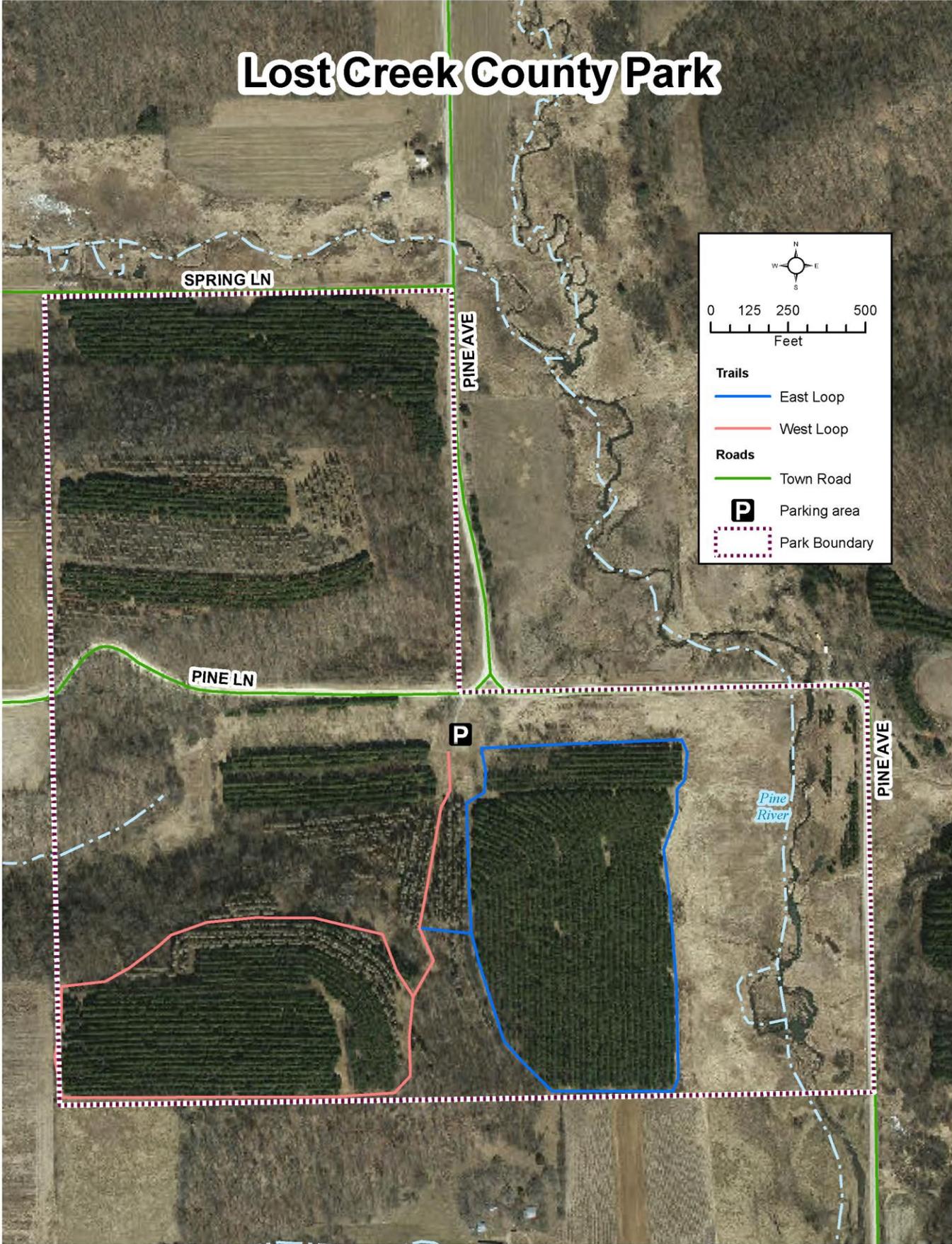
Map 5 Detailed Esofea/Rentz Memorial Park



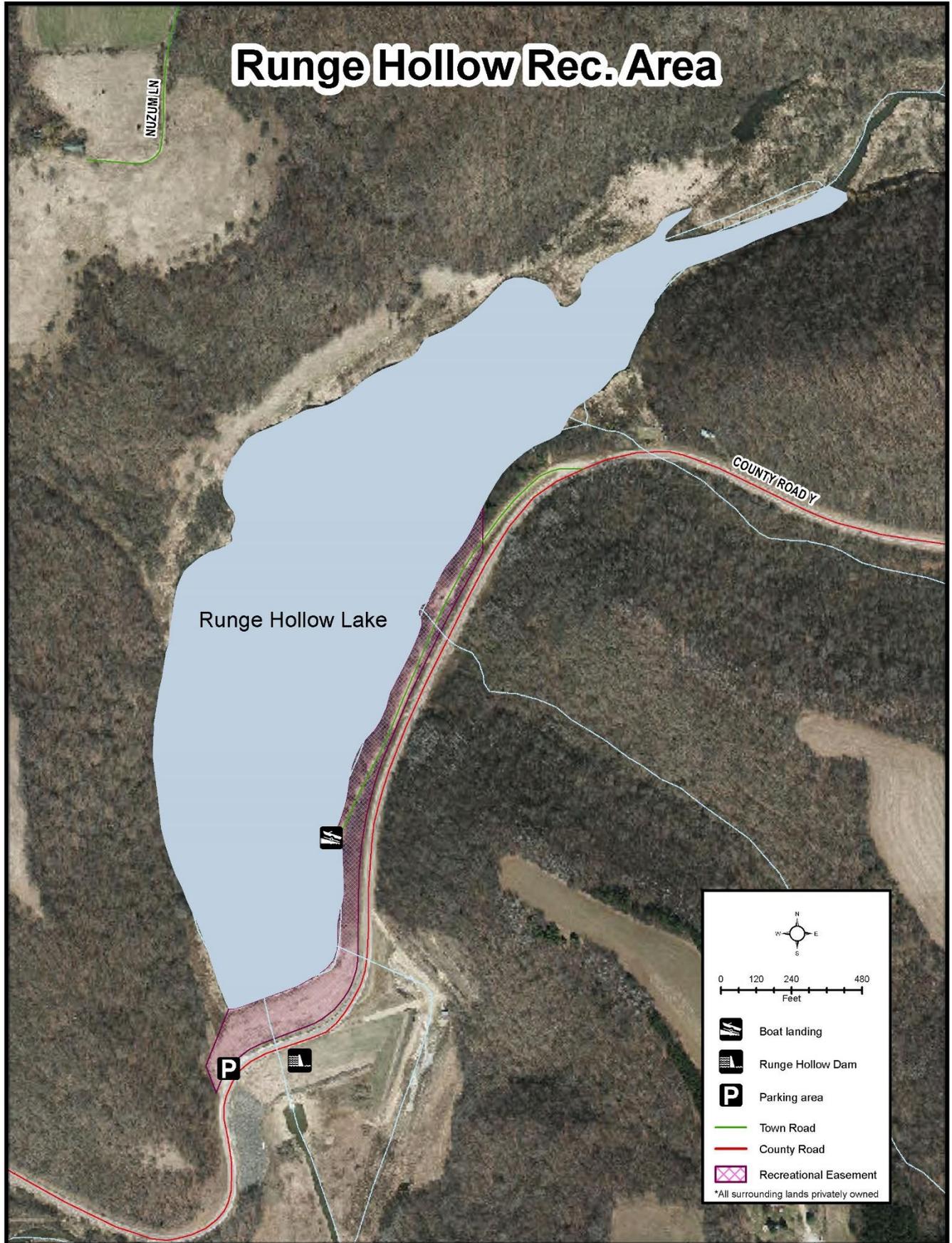
Map 6 Jersey Valley County Park



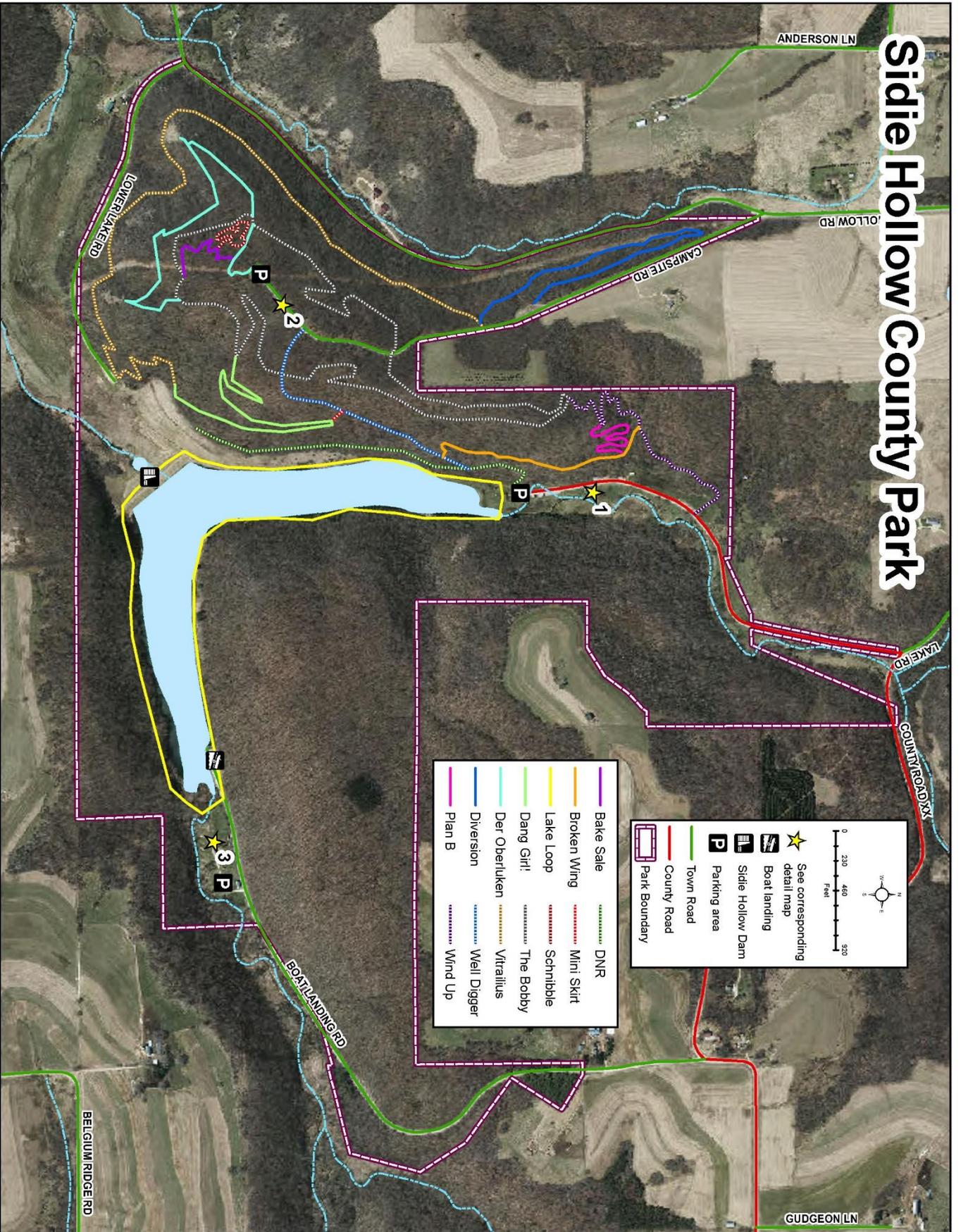
# Lost Creek County Park



Map 8 Runge Hollow Rec. Area

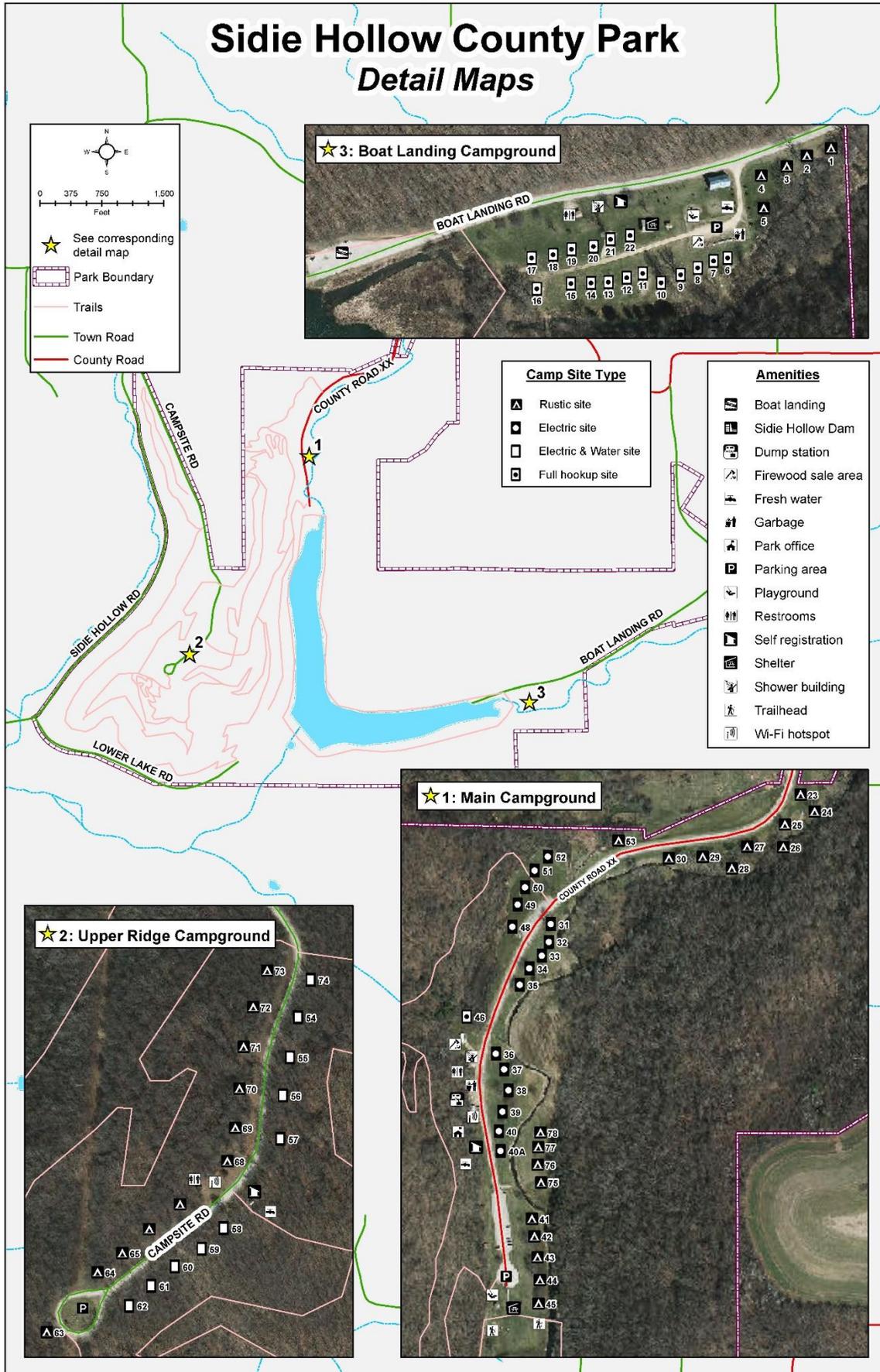


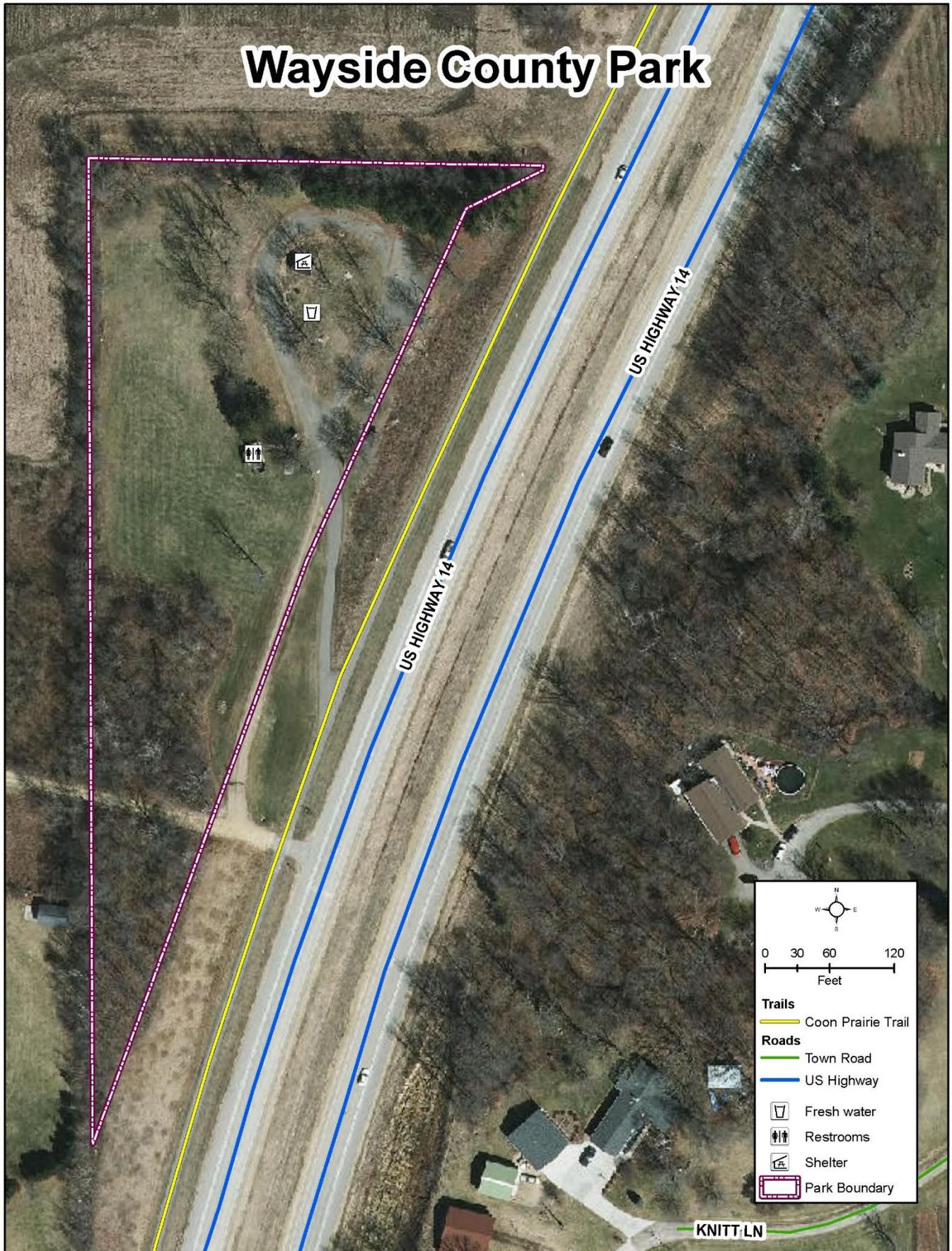
# Sidie Hollow County Park



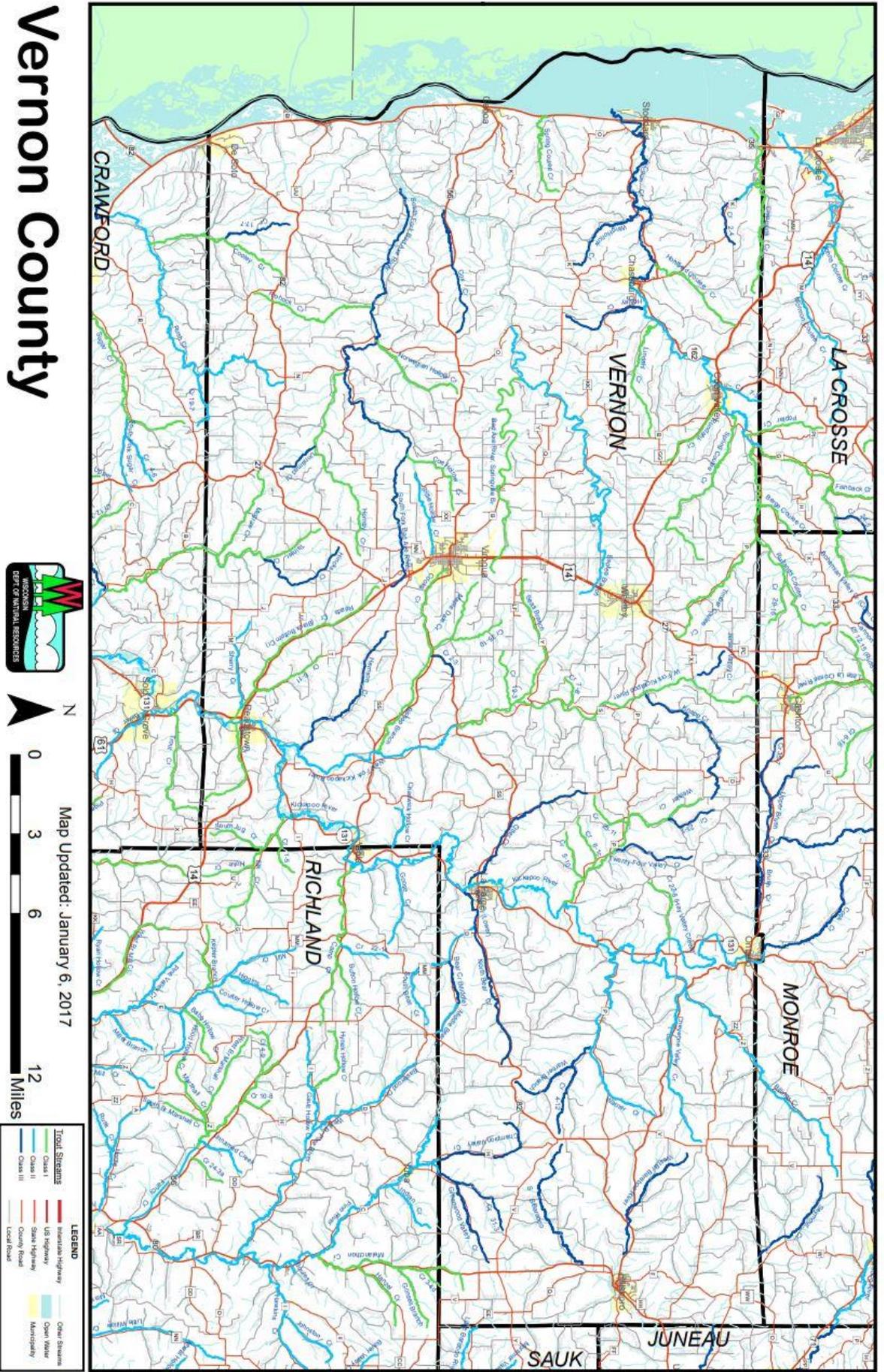
Map 10 Detailed Sidie Hollow County Park

# Sidie Hollow County Park Detail Maps





Map 12 Trout Fishing Streams by Class





**Adoption Resolution:**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2021-17**

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING**

**VERNON COUNTY 2021-2025 OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN**

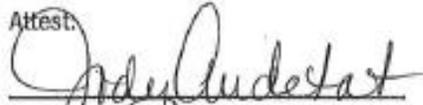
WHEREAS, the County of Vernon, has participated in a county-wide Outdoor Recreation Planning Program covering both unincorporated and incorporated areas of Vernon County, and

WHEREAS, said planning program has been conducted by Vernon County through the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission in conjunction with Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department, Economic Development and Tourism Department, and

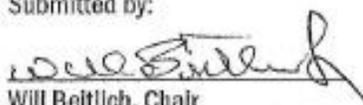
WHEREAS, said planning document reflects community and county recreation needs in light of goals, objectives, and generally accepted recreation planning standards.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County of Vernon does hereby adopt the Vernon County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2025 as its guide to future recreation facility improvements in the County of Vernon.

Adopted by the Vernon County Board of Supervisors on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of June, 21.

Attest:  
  
Jody Audetat, County Clerk

County Fiscal Impact: \$0.00

Submitted by:  
  
Will Beltlich, Chair  
Land and Water Conservation Committee

5-13-21  
Date

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Yes	No	Other