

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

CHAPTER 900 – RECREATION

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Approved by Washburn County Board of Supervisors October 19, 2021

No Revisions

900 RECREATION

Recreation is an integral part of the management of the County Forest and recreational uses are a part of many of the previous Sections. Due to the tremendous growth in recreation demands over the duration of the last planning period, the County continues to recognize the importance of recreational considerations as part of forest management prescriptions and activities and the need for continued intensive recreational planning as contained in this Chapter.

905 PLANNING

The Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan also guides the Washburn County Forest recreation program. This plan is revised every five years and is made part of this Plan. The Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan includes, but is not limited to recreational activities on the Forest. It incorporates snowmobile and ATV/UTV, campgrounds, parks and boat landings, recreational maintenance and development plans and other recreation surveys and reports.

The Outdoor Recreation Plan, Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), public input, and other local or regional planning documents will be used as resources in recreational planning and development efforts. The responsibility for recreational planning, development and maintenance on the County Forest will rest with the Committee.

910 AUTHORITY

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances and s.28.11, Wis. Stats. authorize the Washburn County Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee to provide recreational opportunities for the public. This authority is further recognized in the mission statement for the Washburn County Forest (Section 100), which specifically identifies outdoor recreational opportunities. The mission statement also charges the Committee to conduct activities in a manner that prevents or minimizes the degradation of the natural resource.

Maps of recreational facilities are appended in Chapter 1000.

Chapter 50 of the Washburn County Code of Ordinances regulates activities on the County Forest. Many of the following sections reference the Ordinance and the full text can be found at:

https://library.municode.com/wi/washburn_county/codes/code_of_ordinances

915 RECREATIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Under this Plan, the Committee is authorized to contract with organizations or individuals to provide recreational services for the public. Under this Plan, Washburn County contracts the following services:

1. Snowmobile trail maintenance on County Forest, private lands and the Wild River Trail.
2. ATV/UTV trail maintenance on the County Forest, private lands and the Wild River Trail
3. Agreement with local clubs to maintain the Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail
4. Agreement with individuals to maintain the Minong Rifle Range.

920 ORGANIZED RECREATIONAL EVENTS/USES

Any event on the Forest which is advertised to the public, for which a fee is charged, or is otherwise organized as an event, requires a permit or authorization by the Committee. Permits may be issued provided the use is consistent with the County Forest Law and management activities on the Forest and will not cause resource damage. The Committee shall require appropriate levels of event liability insurance for each event.

925 ENTRANCE AND USER FEES

The Committee is empowered and shall have responsibility for the establishment of entrance, camping and other user fees on recreational facilities maintained by the County Forestry Department. Fees shall be comparable with those charged by similar private parties, if such private services exist. User generated fees shall be utilized, where appropriate, to assist with the maintenance of the facility where collected.

930 UNDESIGNATED RECREATIONAL USE OF THE FOREST

Undesignated recreation includes those informal activities for which the County generally does not provide a facility or service. These uses include activities such as hunting, fishing, biking, hiking and others. Such uses do not normally require a permit but must be conducted in compliance with the Washburn County Code of Ordinances. The Forest Administrator and the Committee shall periodically review such uses and enact ordinances as necessary to protect the resource.

930.1 HUNTING

The entire County Forest is open for regulated hunting, with the exception of designated areas that are developed for high levels of public use, such as Leisure Lake Youth Camp, Totogatic Park, and Sawmill Campground. The boundaries of these areas are signed indicating closure. Hunting and/or firearms are also prohibited with 1700 feet of the Northwood School located in NW ¼ Section 1 T42N-R12W (s.29.22, Wis. Stats.)

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances regulates activities relating to hunting. In general, the following activities are regulated:

1. Tree stands are permitted provided they do not damage the tree and are either,
 - a. Completely removed at the end of hunting hours each day or
 - b. Are marked with the owners name and address or DNR customer ID number and are completely removed after 9 days.
 - c. The use of nails, lag screws, screw steps or other damaging devices is not permitted.
2. Commercially made, or hand-made blinds are permitted provided they are either:
 - a. Completely removed at the end of hunting hours each day or
 - b. Are marked with the owners name and address or DNR customer ID number and are completely removed after 9 daysBlinds made of 100% natural, on-site vegetation are not regulated.
3. ATV/UTV use is regulated. Please refer to Chapter 700 for Road and Access Plan information; Section 940.3 for ATV/UTV Trails; and Chapter 4000 for unit restrictions.
4. Cutting or harvesting vegetation is prohibited. This includes pruning trees or cutting shooting lanes.

930.2 FISHING

All lakes, rivers and streams within or adjacent to the Forest are available for fishing unless otherwise identified in state regulations.

930.3 PICNICKING / DAY USE

Picnicking and other day uses, outside of established facilities, is allowed. The Washburn County Code also regulates day use. In general, the following activities are regulated:

1. All litter, trash or rubbish must be removed
2. Cutting or harvesting live vegetation is not permitted

3. Fires may not be left unattended unless the ground is 100% snow covered
4. Fires may not be ignited unless the ground is 100% snow covered in the towns of Casey, Chicog, Minong or Springbrook

930.4 CAMPING

A permit is required to camp outside of developed campgrounds on the County Forest.

Permits are available from the Washburn County Forestry Office or may be obtained online at:

https://www.washburncountyparks.us/parks/permits_and_products/permits_category/purchase/

Permits may be denied for specific areas at the discretion of the Forest Administrator. The Washburn County Code of Ordinances regulates camping, and the following restrictions are enumerated in Code:

1. Camping is permitted with a tent or lesser facility
2. Camping use may not exceed 14 consecutive days
3. A permit must be acquired
4. Camping in the Towns of Casey, Chicog, Springbrook or Minong is not permitted during the months of April or May.
5. Campers may not leave an open fire unless it has no smoke and the entire coal or ash bed is cool enough to touch by hand
6. Campers may not ignite a fire unless the ground is 100% snow covered in the Towns of Casey, Chicog, Minong or Springbrook
7. Camping during the first nine days of the gun deer season, in a camper, is permitted within 200 feet of a Town Road or County Forest Road. A permit is required.

930.5 MOTORIZED TRAVEL

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances and the Washburn County Road and Access Plan regulate motorized uses on the Forest. The full text of these regulations is included in Chapter 700. Unit specific maps of open roads are available in Chapter 4000. In general, the following regulations apply to motorized travel outside of developed recreational trail systems.

1. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on a trail designated closed with a gate, earthen berm, sign or other closure.
2. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle off the surface of a trail that is designated open to motor vehicles by the Committee. *Cross country travel is not permitted anywhere.*
3. Two-wheeled motorized travel (motorcycles, mini-bikes, dirt bikes) is not permitted unless the machine is street legal and operation is on a County Forest Road (gas tax)
4. ATV's/UTV's are not allowed anywhere on the County Forest from April 1 through the first Friday before Memorial Weekend.

930.6 OTHER USES

Other uses of the County Forest are permitted provided they are not specifically addressed within the County Code of Ordinances. Mountain biking, horseback riding, and other non-motorized uses are currently not regulated. The Committee may, at any time, enact ordinances, or rules, to protect the County Forest should damage, or user conflict, begin to occur.

930.6.1 Electric Vehicles

At the time of the drafting of this Plan, the popularity of electric bicycles (E-bikes) is on the rise. For the purpose of this plan, any bicycle with a motor (electric or otherwise) is considered a motorized vehicle and subject to the same Ordinance restrictions as any other motor vehicle. These technically fall under the definition of two-wheeled motorized vehicle and are not permitted on the County Forest.

As other electric vehicles are developed and emerge in the market, they are considered as a motorize vehicle and subject to the same ordinance language as motorized uses.

935 DESIGNATED RECREATION AREAS / USES

Designated recreation areas are those for which the County provides a facility. The Washburn County Forest has developed sites and areas to accommodate a fairly high level of public use. The Committee may prohibit other recreation activities that are not compatible with the intent of the developed facilities.

The County has noted increasing demands for developed recreational facilities. Washburn County will maintain most currently developed trails and facilities and may develop additional

as demand warrants and available funding permits. Maps of existing facilities are included in the appendix of this Plan.

935.1 CAMPGROUNDS

935.1.1 Totogatic Park

Totogatic Park is located on the Minong Flowage, northwest of Minong. The park facilities include 75 campsites, electricity, electric wells, shower house, pit toilets, beach, handicap accessible fishing pier, boat landing, dump station, fish cleaning station, firewood vending, pavilion, playground, basketball court, volleyball court, and caretaker's residence.

At the time of the drafting of this Plan, the County is undertaking an expansion project that will add up to 30 additional sites to the Park. The expansion also includes provisions for an additional shower building, expanded boat landing parking, and a new maintenance shop building.

935.1.2 Sawmill Park

Sawmill Campground is located on Sawmill Lake, north of Birchwood. The park facilities include 25 campsites, hand pumps, 2 pit toilets, fishing pier, nature trail, and pavilion.

935.1.3 Dugan Run Equestrian Trailheads

Washburn County maintains camping facilities at the north and south trailheads of the Dugan Run horse trails. The north trailhead, located on Dugan Lake Road, has parking, a pit toilet, pavilion, hand pump, and an open area for camping. The south trailhead, located off the intersection of Harmon Lake Road and Hawthorne Drive has parking, pit toilet, pavilion, well, 8 campsites with electricity.

935.1.4 Ordinances

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances regulates use of designated campgrounds on the Forest. In accordance with this Ordinance, no person within a campground area shall:

1. Camp anywhere other than at established campsites
2. Dispose of trash other than in provided containers

3. Discharge or possess an uncased firearm or weapon
4. Ignite a fire unless in a designated fire ring
5. Keep a pet unleashed
6. Use the area between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. unless a registered camper
7. Keep horses, livestock, or other domesticated animals not considered a household pet. Horses are permitted at the Dugan horse trails
8. Leave animal excrement within a developed area

935.2 LEISURE LAKE YOUTH CAMP

Washburn County operates and maintains a youth camp at Leisure Lake in the Town of Casey. This facility includes a main lodge, craft building, six cabins, bathroom, beach, ball field, picnic area, communal fire ring, boat landing and nature trail. The facility is rented on a donation basis with first reservation opportunities given to local youth groups.

935.3 PICNIC / DAY USE AREAS

Picnic and day use areas maintained by the County include (these may be part of other park facilities previously listed):

- a. Slim Creek Flowage
- b. Leisure Lake
- c. Hallstrom Woods
- d. Harmon Lake
- e. Totogatic Park
- f. Sawmill Park
- g. Stony Brook Rest Area
- h. Berry Road Rest Area
- i. Casey Loop Rest Area
- j. Saronia Wild River Trail Parking Area
- k. Trego Wild River Trail Parking Area

935.4 SWIMMING AREAS / BEACHES

Washburn County maintains swimming areas and beaches at the following facilities. Official swimming areas are marked with swim ropes and buoys. Lifeguards are not provided.

- a. Totogatic Park beach
- b. Leisure Lake beach

935.5 BOAT LANDINGS

At several locations, both on and off the County Forest, areas have been developed for water access. These generally include a parking lot and an approach to water. These are provided for public access to waters for recreational purposes and are shown on recreation maps included in Chapter 1000. Water access is also discussed in Chapter 700. These landings are not to be considered boat mooring sites and camping directly on the landing site is not permitted. This list includes landing on or near the County Forest and are not all maintained by the County:

- a. Loyhead Lake
- b. Wolf Lake
- c. Sawmill Lake
- d. Big McKenzie Lake
- e. Elbow Lake
- f. Harmon Lake
- g. Chippanazie Creek (Davis Flowage)
- h. Spider Lake
- i. Red Lake
- j. Loon Lake
- k. Leisure Lake
- l. Casey Lake
- m. Tranus Lake
- n. Chippanazie Lake
- o. Minong Flowage (Totogatic Park)
- p. Slim Creek Flowage

These landings, including maintenance jurisdiction, are further described in Section 735.

935.5.1 Undeveloped Water Access Points

Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for launching with a boat trailer. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be

evaluated for either repair, upgrade or closure in the future. All new developed water access sites must be approved by the Committee.

935.6 MINONG RIFLE RANGE

Ranges for public use are permitted on County Forest lands. The Minong Rifle range is maintained both by the County and local volunteers and is open to the public. Amenities include ranges to 400 yards, backstops, shooting benches, shooting shelter, pit toilet, trap range and pavilion. In general, the range is open for target shooting of typical sporting firearms and weapons. Bombs, incendiary devices, explosives, and fully automatic weapons are not permitted. Range use is limited to the use of black powder, rim fire, or center fire weapons that are considered as a typical sporting weapon.

935.7 CABIN PERMIT SITES

Starting in the 1960's, Washburn County offered a permit system to allow private cabins to be placed on County Forest lands. Over time, this program resulted in conflict since only a selected group of people were allowed to have these cabins. Legal review by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources resulted in a determination that cabin permits were in conflict with the County Forest Law. A sunset clause of December 31, 2010 was enacted and all cabins were removed from the forest.

The prior Plan included a recommendation that some of these cabin sites be considered for establishment of remote camping sites. The intention was to create campsites where individuals could camp with larger than a tent facility (restricted in Washburn County Code, except for 9 day gun deer season). This would provide for similar hunting access on the forest and would be allowable provided everyone had equal access to utilize the site. This Plan recommends that a remote campsites policy be considered for feasibility and possible implementation.

940 DESIGNATED RECREATION TRAILS

Designated recreation trails are those for which the County provides a trail and/or facility. The County currently provides trail systems that accommodate a fairly high level of public uses. The Committee may prohibit other activities or uses that are not compatible with the intent of the trail system.

Whenever possible, multiple uses of various trail systems are encouraged and are subject to policy review by the Committee. Wherever possible, attempts should be made to avoid user conflicts. Recreational users, however, may encounter forest management activities. Maps of trail systems are included in Chapter 1000.

940.1 TRAIL PLANNING, CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee will review all requests for additional recreation trails. Groups, or individuals requesting specific trail development or specific use, must present a plan for the long-term funding and maintenance of proposed trails. New trail proposals must comply with County policy, plans and standards. Trail construction plans shall incorporate all necessary federal, state or local permits and shall adhere to Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality.

940.2 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

The Washburn County Forest is a multiple use forest. Non-motorized recreation trails are a legitimate use of this forest. Design and maintenance of these trails may highlight natural features present on the Forest and should minimize damage and user conflicts. Trail use and development must be compatible with the characteristics of the landscapes and be as sustainable as practical. It is the policy of the Washburn County Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee to manage non-motorized trails on the Forest.

940.2.1 Hiking Trails

All trails on the Forest are open for use by hikers. The County Forest does, however, maintain the following official hiking/nature trails:

- a. Sawmill Campground Nature Trail
- b. Leisure Lake Nature Trail

These trails have varying levels of maintenance. The Forestry Department continues to look for volunteer individuals, clubs or organizations to assist with routine trail maintenance.

940.2.1.1 Ice Age National Scenic Trail

The National Trails System Act was authorized by Congress in 1968. In October 1980, Congress amended the Act to authorize and establish the Ice Age National

Scenic Trail as part of the National Trails System. A Memorandum of Understanding exists between the Triad, composed of the National Parks Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Inc. with the purpose of cooperating in the completion and long-term management of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in Wisconsin.

Washburn County entered into a Land Use Agreement with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (now known as the Ice Age Trail Alliance) in 1995 for the purpose of managing approximately 7 miles of trail on the Washburn County Forest. This agreement expired in 2005 and no updated agreement was executed for trail management.

Through the 2006-2020 County Forest Plan duration, many different local volunteers were in contact with the Forestry Department regarding trail maintenance activities. There did not, however, appear to be consistent representation from an organized club or other entity that was taking responsibility for trail operations and maintenance.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance, based in Cross Plains, WI, has staff who perform trail development and management roles, as well as marketing and partner relations. Discussions took place between Washburn County and the Alliance during the drafting of this Chapter, specifically relating to trail operations and maintenance. It is a recommendation of this Plan that staff continue to work with the Alliance to build an effective working relationship as a means to provide a high-quality trail. The working relationship includes a goal of entering into a new land use agreement for the Ice Age Trail on the Forest.

While the Ice Age Trail footprint may remain on the Forest, improvements, relocations, or special projects will not be permitted until a new land use agreement is executed. Routine maintenance will be allowed. It is a recommendation of this Plan that the following conditions be met before the Committee considers approval of an agreement:

1. A meeting between statewide representatives of the “Triad” and Forestry Department staff will be held to discuss which entity is most appropriate to be the main managing group for trail operations.
2. At least annual meetings will be planned in order to facilitate communication between the parties.
3. A list of main points of contacts and their responsibilities will be developed (and maintained)
4. Ice Age Trail representatives will draft and submit a document that outlines the expectations for the type of trail that is desired, including signage, amenities, and other factors.

940.2.2 Bicycle Trails

Any trail located on the forest is open to bicycle use, with the exception of winter use on snowmobile trails. “Fat tire” bicycles are not permitted on groomed snowmobile trails.

Washburn County provides for the Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail on County Forest lands in the towns of Madge and Beaverbrook. Approximately 20 miles of mountain bike trail are maintained by local volunteers. These trails are a mix of single track, logging trails and a portion on the ATV/UTV trail surface. Portions of these trails are groomed for winter use by fat-tire bicyclists. At the time of this Plan drafting, the only facility on site is the parking lot. This Plan recognizes the value of adding other amenities such as bathroom(s), well, pavilion, picnic tables, etc.

This trail system receives a fairly high degree of use and usage is expected to increase. This Plan recommends continued operation and possible expansion of this trail system.

Electric Bicycles / E-bikes are considered a motor vehicle and are regulated as a two-wheeled motorized vehicle. These are not permitted on the bike trails or anywhere on the Forest.

At the time of the drafting of this Plan, local bike enthusiasts are working towards authorizing and developing a single track mountain bike trail parallel to the east side of the Wild River Trail running from Spooner to the ATV/UTV trail crossing the

Beaverbrook Wildlife Area. The County, as managing entity of the Wild River Trail, will participate and help facilitate this trail connection where feasible.

940.2.3 Horseback Trails

Any trail located on the Forest is open to equestrian use, with the exception of winter groomed trails (ski and fat tire bike). The Forestry Parks and Recreation Committee, by Ordinance, has the ability to further regulate horse use and can do so by adoption of rule. The County will monitor for damages and conflicts and implement rules as necessary.

Washburn County manages the Dugan Run Horse Trail in the towns of Madge, Birchwood, Crystal and Stone Lake. Approximately 30 miles of designated horse trail utilize a mixture of single track, logging trails, County Forest Roads and a portion of ATV/UTV trail. Maintenance on these trails is conducted jointly between local volunteers and County staff. This trail system includes two trailheads, one on the north off of Dugan Lake Road and one on the south off of Hawthorne Drive. The north trailhead has parking, bathroom, pavilion, well with hand pump, picnic areas and a large area for camping. The south trailhead has parking, bathroom, pavilion, electric well, and 8 campsites.

This trail system receives varying levels of usage and generally far below what was expected when the trail system was developed. This Plan recommends continued operation of this trail along with monitoring of use levels. It may be advisable to further promote this trail system. This plan does not recommend any expansion of these trails. A plan should be implemented to develop a septic system and sanitary dump station at the south trailhead.

This Plan also recommends developing some level of invasive species monitoring of the horse trail systems. Horses can spread invasive species fairly easily and the County may consider adopting a requirement for weed free feed, or other similar program to minimize risk of invasives. If invasives are found relating to horse trail use, the County may consider closure of the trail complex, or other mitigating measures.

940.2.4 Ski Trails

Washburn County maintains two regularly groomed ski trails.

- a. Nordic Ski Trail is an 8 mile trail system located in the Town of Birchwood. The trail has parking facilities on the north and south ends, off of State Highway 70 and County Highway B. The system is groomed by the County for classical skiing.
- b. Totogatic Ski Trail is an 8 mile trail system in the Town of Minong. Parking is located on the west side of 53, just north of Minong. The system is groomed by the County for classical skiing.

Both of these trails are used fairly heavily during good snow conditions and the Plan recommends continued operation and maintenance. This Plan also recommends upgrading at least one of these trails to accommodate both free-style (skating) and traditional skiing. The addition of bathrooms, Adirondacks (replace) or other amenities would also greatly enhance these facilities.

In the past, trails were groomed by the National Parks Service at the Leisure Lake Youth Camp and also by the County at Hallstrom Woods. One or both of these trail systems could be added into the County grooming schedule if the use is expected to be sufficient to warrant the additional workload.

940.2.5 Canoe Portage Trails

The County currently maintains two canoe portage trails in the Birchwood area. Both of these are located in high-density lake areas and include short portage trails connecting lakes.

- a. Sawmill Lake Canoe Portage Trail
This route starts at Sawmill Lake, either at the Campground or the boat landing. Nine short portage trails connect Sawmill, Fawn, Beartrap, Tadpole, Telstar, Mallard, Otter and Deep Lakes. The longest portage is approximately 1000 feet while most are 300 feet or less.

- b. Loyhead Lake Canoe Portage
This trail starts at Loyhead Lake boat landing adjacent to the Birchwood Firelane. The route includes seven portage trails that connect Loyhead, Bear, Lost, Bluebill,

Pine Point and Deep Lakes. The longest portage is 500 feet while most are 300 feet or less.

This Plan recommends continued maintenance of both canoe portage trails. They are an extremely unique experience in northwest Wisconsin and attract many visitors. This Plan also recommends increased levels of maintenance. The routes were cleared and re-signed in 2017 and the County should inspect the portages at least annually.

940.2.6 Future New Non-Motorized Trails

Proposals to construct additional or new trails or trail facilities will be considered only if they meet all of the following criteria (as determined by the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee):

- a. The trail must be identified as a recommendation within this Plan or within the Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan and must be presented to the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee for approval.
- b. It must be shown that a significant demand exists and that there will be sufficient trail use to justify the creation of a new trail or trail system. A direct benefit to the local community and/or County must also be documented.
- c. An organized club, or user group, must make a commitment to maintain or assist in maintenance of the trail.
- d. Trail proposals are to include provisions documenting that undue resource damage will not occur or will be avoided.
- e. Trail proposals are to identify any potential user conflicts and provisions for mitigation.
- f. Trail proposals are to include construction and design plans that comply with all applicable laws, ordinances and also include plans to secure all necessary permits.
- g. Trail proposals are to include revenue sources for trail development costs as well as an itemized annual budget acceptable to the County.

The County may also consult with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan or other regional planning documents to determine the feasibility of allowing for additional trail systems. It is also important to note that non-motorized trail systems are generally not supported by any reliable grant programs. Because of this, it is very

important to research and evaluate revenue sources and expenditure estimates as part of any trail proposal evaluation.

940.2.7 Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee Approved Future Non-Motorized Trails

1. There appears to be a demand for hiking trails, especially close to municipalities.
2. There appears to be a demand for interpretive/nature trails.
3. There may be an opportunity to develop non-motorized trail systems adjacent to the Northwood School.
4. There may be opportunity to develop trail opportunities near Totogatic Park.
5. The area east and south of the Slim Creek Flowage and potentially as far as Sawmill Park could provide an opportunity for an extensive non-motorized trail complex.
6. The Barronett area could provide opportunity for looped hiking trail systems, possibly in conjunction with the Ice Age Trail.
7. Demand for mountain bike trails appears to be growing rapidly and expansion of Wildcat Trails appears to be a legitimate proposal.

940.3 MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

940.3.1 Snowmobile Trails

The Forestry Department recognizes and manages approximately 260 miles of snowmobile trail in Washburn County. Trails are routed across County Forest, private lands, DNR owned rail grades and others. There are 3 types of official snowmobile trails recognized by the County and authorized either on the Forest or sponsored by the County on private or other properties.

940.3.1.1 Categories

- a. Funded Trails – A system of state approved and funded snowmobile trails authorized by the County. This system is part of the statewide network of snowmobile trails that link Washburn County to other counties and areas of the state. Snowmobile registrations, trail passes and a portion of the gas tax are used to support trail operations. As of 2020, there are approximately 243 miles of official, funded trails within Washburn County. Approximately 124 miles of these are on County Forest lands and 40 miles are on the Wild River Trail (operated under easement to the County).

- b. Club Trails – A smaller system of club sponsored trails is also in place on both County and private lands. Many of these connect to local business, cross waterways or connect road routes. There are approximately 27 miles of club/local trails recognized by Washburn County, and 5 miles of these are on County Forest lands. These are not included in grant funded programs and are generally groomed or maintained at the expense of local clubs.
- c. Unfunded Trails – In the past, Washburn County has identified and designated trails that were eligible to be funded under DNR grant programs but were unable to secure maintenance grants due to funding shortfalls. In 2018, the County was able to “transfer” mileage from other trails as a correction to funded miles allocated by DNR versus actual miles calculated by GPS inventory. As of 2020, there are no remaining trails in this category.

940.3.1.2 Snowmobile Trail Maintenance

Snowmobile trail grants are applied for and administered by the County. A majority of snowmobile trail maintenance, especially grooming, is done by local clubs. Washburn County contracts with the Minong, Rolling Hills, and Birchwood Bobcats clubs for maintenance of official snowmobile trails. The County will assist with non-grooming trail maintenance activities as needed and be reimbursed when sufficient grant funds are available to do so.

The County shall inspect and monitor bridges and other infrastructure on the trail system periodically and attempt to secure grants to replace or rehabilitate as needed.

940.3.1.3 Ordinances Relating to Snowmobile Trails

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances and the Washburn County Road and Access Plan regulate County snowmobile trails. A summary of the regulations relating to designated snowmobile trails is as follows:

- a. All snowmobile trails are closed to cars and trucks December 1 through April 1, including County Forest Roads designated as snowmobile trails
- b. The Forest Administrator will make the determination to officially open and close snowmobile trails based on snow and maintenance conditions.
- c. The official closure of the snowmobile trail system does not prohibit the use of motor vehicles that are permitted to operate on winter use trails on County

Forest Lands. Users may travel those portions of the designated snowmobile trails on County Forest lands, as permitted by ordinance (generally motor vehicles under 900 pounds) and at their own risk.

- d. The Ordinance allows the Committee to establish speed limits on general trail sections and allows the Forest Administrator to establish speed limits where trails intersect active timber sales.

940.3.1.4 Future Snowmobile Trails

The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee shall have jurisdiction over any snowmobile trail development proposals. It is recommended that future trail proposals include a careful consideration of costs, benefits, and impacts and as part of a larger planning effort. Trail projects will be avoided in cases where annual maintenance funding is not available.

This Plan recognizes, in general, that the existing snowmobile trail mileage and network in the County is sufficient. Proposals for additional trails will be discouraged by the Forest Administrator and the Committee unless they meet any of the following criteria:

- a. The trail reconnects Trail 140 from the Fenander Road Area to Trego. This section of trail was abandoned as a result of lost trail agreements.
- b. Trail connection that eliminates snowmobile road route on Waggoner Road.
- c. Trail connection that eliminates wet area between Highway 53 and the Popple Island Road area.
- d. Relocations due to lost trail agreements on private lands.
- e. New trail construction to move snowmobile traffic off of roadways.
- f. Adjustments to address issues of public safety or environmental damage.

940.3.2 ATV/UTV Trails

Washburn County recognizes approximately 168 miles of official summer use ATV/UTV trail. Trails are routed primarily on County Forest, the Wild River Trail, Shell Lake Grade, some private lands, and road routes that connect trail systems. Washburn County also recognizes approximately 146 miles of winter use ATV trails. There are several classification of ATV/UTV trails recognized by the County.

940.3.2.1 Trail Categories

- a. Funded Winter ATV Trails – a majority of the state funded snowmobile trails that lie on County Forest are also funded and designated as winter use ATV trails. Not all snowmobile trails on Washburn County Forest are funded as such, but all snowmobile trails on the Forest are also open to ATV from December 1 to April 1. Washburn County does not permit UTV use on winter trails, with the exception of the Wild River Trail and Shell Lake Grade. There are approximately 146 miles of winter funded ATV trails. There are approximately 46 miles of winter UTV riding opportunities.
- b. Summer ATV/UTV Trails – for the purpose of summer ATV trails, ATV and UTV's are treated as the same type of vehicle, as all summer funded ATV trails managed by Washburn County are also open to UTV's. Summer use ATV/UTV trails lie primarily on County Forest Lands and also on the Wild River Trail, which is owned by the DNR and managed under easement granted to Washburn County. There are approximately 116 miles of summer funded ATV/UTV trails.
- c. Troute Trails – A Troute is a combination of trail and route. These trails receive partial funding from the ATV/UTV program and there are several sections of County Forest Gas Tax roads, designated as ATV/UTV trail, included in this category. Washburn County manages approximately 18 miles as Troute.
- d. Hybrid Trails – these are ATV/UTV trails that are open to highway vehicles, not receiving gas tax, that receive 50% funding. Hybrid trails established prior to 2012 are “grandfathered” as fully funded ATV trails and Washburn County has approximately 10 miles that are included in the summer ATV/UTV funding category. There are no other sections of trail with the Hybrid classification and this Plan does not recommend establishing new ATV/UTV trails that mix with highway traffic.
- e. Connecting Routes – for the purpose of this Plan, a Connecting Route is meant to be a section of public roadway, open to ATV/UTV use that is used to connect designated ATV/UTV trails within Washburn County. In general, these are short sections where using the roadway is the only way to connect trails. While there are hundreds of miles of road routes open to ATV/UTV in Washburn County, only those sections considered necessary, at the discretion of the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee, to connect trail systems will be mapped on the official ATV/UTV map sanctioned by Washburn County.

While there are abundant opportunities to legally operate ATV's and UTV's on public roadways (routes), this Plan recommends promoting **trail** use and recognizing only those sections of route necessary to connect trail systems.

As of 2020, the following road routes (approximately 34 miles) are considered necessary trail connectors and are authorized to be included in the official ATV/UTV map developed and sanctioned by the County:

Wild River Trail to Casey Loop Routes	14 miles
Stony Brook Trail to Sawyer County	6 miles
Stony Brook Trail – Taylor Lake Road	.5 miles
Trail 39 – Cty F and Tranus Lake Road	1 mile
Beaverbrook to Harmon Trails – Leesome/Harmon	4.5 miles
Harmon Trails to Birchwood – Long Lake Rd	.5 miles
Harmon Trails to Birchwood – Birchwood Firelane	1 mile
Spider Loop – Shoreline Drive	.5 miles
Spider Loop to Sawyer County – Thayer/Outpost	1 mile
Spider Loop – Crystal Point	1.5 miles
Spider Loop to Birchwood – Berry/Nice/Elbow Lk Rds	3.5 miles
Spider Loop to Birchwood – Dalen / 30 th	.75 miles

- f. Club Trails – these are sections of trail that are maintained by clubs but are not designated under the state funding system. In general, club trails will not be sanctioned or permitted on County Forest Lands. There are, however, situations where the local clubs have established route connections to local businesses on County Forest gas tax roads. In particular, there is a short connection from Trail 39, north to County F that connects to a business establishment. Other club trails on private lands may be maintained by the local clubs but will not generally be included on the official ATV/UTV map.

940.3.2.2 ATV/UTV Trail Maintenance

For the purpose of summer use ATV/UTV trails, Washburn County's goal is to manage trail systems in a sustainable manner. For the purpose of this Plan and for trail development and maintenance, the term sustainable/sustainability is intended to

mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident that there are very limited circumstances where a summer use ATV/UTV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive and routine maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and minimizes the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity and cause erosion.

Trail maintenance and rehabilitation projects will generally comply with the guidelines established in the WCFA ATV/UTV Sustainable Trail Guidance. This guidance can be found in Chapter 1000.

940.3.2.3 County and Club Roles

ATV/UTV maintenance and rehabilitation grants will be applied for and administered by the County. The County shall also periodically inspect and monitor trails, bridges and other infrastructure and replace/rehabilitate as necessary. Certain trail maintenance activities are done by the local ATV/Snowmobile clubs under contract with the County. Washburn County contracts with the Minong, Rolling Hills, and Birchwood Bobcats clubs. In addition, certain grant funds are retained, at the County's discretion, to fund trail maintenance activities conducted by the Forestry Department. The County will also assist with trail maintenance activities as needed and be reimbursed when sufficient grant funds are available to do so. The general maintenance plans for the Washburn County summer use ATV/UTV trail system include:

- a. Local clubs to provide routine trail surface grading as necessary to provide for safe riding conditions
- b. County is to periodically inspect trail signing, trail conditions, bridges, infrastructure, etc.
- c. Clubs to provide for all trail signing
- d. Clubs to provide for mowing and brushing
- e. Clubs to provide for minor gravel, spot rehabilitation projects
- f. County to undertake major rehabilitation, gravel projects.
- g. County to apply for any necessary Chapter 30, Storm Water or other permits
- h. County to grade trail systems at least annually.

940.3.2.4 Ordinances Relating to ATV/UTV Trails

The Washburn County Code of Ordinances and the Washburn County Road and Access Plan regulate County ATV/UTV trails. A summary of the regulations relating to trails is as follows:

- a. Trails are closed from April 1 through the first Friday before Memorial Weekend, with the exception of the Wild River Trail and Shell Lake Grade. The Forest Administrator may adjust this closure as conditions permit.
- b. ATV/UTV operation is not permitted off the surface of any trail unless on a trail established open by the County.
- c. Operation in any wetland or riparian area is prohibited
- d. Trails are closed at any time that DNR fire danger is listed at very high or higher.
- e. Two-wheeled motorized travel is prohibited.
- f. Tracked or otherwise modified ATV's or UTV's are not permitted.
- g. UTV's are not permitted on groomed snowmobile trail surfaces, except for the Wild River Trail and Shell Lake Grade.

940.3.2.5 Future Summer Use ATV/UTV Trails

Washburn County has recognized that motorized trails are a legitimate use of the multiple use Forest. ATV/UTV's trails are an appropriate use, provided they are designed in a sustainable manner and can be maintained in a way that minimizes resource damage and reduces user conflicts. Over the prior 15 year planning period, Washburn County made significant progress in developing trails in accordance with an ATV Master Plan. This Plan recognizes that the ATV Master Plan has substantially been completed as much as practical. The original ATV Master Plan is included in the appendix.

Existing trails receive a very high level of use and it is proving difficult to keep up with trail maintenance, especially given the increasing size, weight and horsepower of UTV's. As a result, the County recognizes that the current footprint of the ATV/UTV trail system within Washburn County, and especially on County Forest lands, is deemed as an appropriate amount of miles to offer the riding public. This Plan identifies the following as appropriate and desired new trails/trail connections:

- a. Connect the City of Shell Lake to the village of Barronett / Barron County via the abandoned railroad grade, Old Highway 63, or Shingle Camp Fire Lane, or a combination thereof.
- b. Take over operational maintenance of the Tuscobia Trail from 30th Avenue east to Sawyer County (under easement transfer from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources)
- c. Look for opportunities to relocate the Waggoner Road/Wozny road route connection in the Town of Frog Creek onto an off-road trail system.

While the projects listed above represent the limit of acceptable new ATV/UTV projects, other, minor trail relocations will be permitted at the discretion of the Committee and/or Forest Administrator. These minor projects include proposals such as relocations due to lost private landowner agreements; projects to improve safety; or proposals to eliminate short sections of road route. Other projects may only be undertaken as an amendment to this Plan by the Washburn County Board of Supervisors.

In order to protect the integrity of the trail system, avoid user conflicts, and prevent unplanned and unregulated ATV/UTV trail system growth, this Plan specifically recommends that the following type of trail projects will not be permitted or sanctioned by the County:

- a. Trail proposals not specifically identified above.
- b. New trail connections on County Forest land that dead end at private land, residences or businesses.
- c. New trail connections that are intended to connect road route systems.
- d. Loop trails that are not part of the larger trail system.
- e. Intensive use/play areas.

940.3.2.6 Future Winter Use ATV Trails

Given that winter use ATV trails are much less maintenance intensive (other than grooming of snow), they are exempt from the new ATV/UTV trail requirements listed in Section 940.3.2.4. New winter ATV trails may be added wherever/whenever grooming efforts are supported by the local club. Winter ATV trail funding may be authorized on County Forest lands if the connections to other

trail systems are available and are primarily off road. Local clubs are responsible for securing updated land use agreements with private landowners that allow for winter use ATV's. The County may apply for new winter ATV miles as trail connections are approved by the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee. New winter use ATV trails will generally not be open for UTV use to reduce conflict and safety issues.

940.3.3 State Trails / Wild River Trail

The Wild River Trail is the 40 mile abandoned railroad grade running north and south through Washburn County. It is part of a larger State Trail system that connects Rice Lake to Superior. This trail is owned by the State of Wisconsin, primarily by the Department of Natural Resources but also a section between Spooner and Trego that is owned by the Department of Transportation. The State of Wisconsin granted an easement to Washburn County to maintain and operate a multiple use motorized recreation trail on this property in 1995.

The 40 miles of this trail in Washburn County is managed as a snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail, but is also open to multiple recreational uses. This trail is the "backbone" of the motorized trail system in the County and nearly all other trail sections ultimately connect here. This Plan recommends the following actions relating to this trail:

- a. Continue to maintain the easement and MOA status of the County having the responsibility of maintaining the trail surface and State having responsibility for sub-grade, structures, reconstruction, etc.
- b. Continue to push for inspections of bridges and culverts to assure structural integrity
- c. Work with the Department of Transportation and the excursion train operations to promote better relationships between trail use and railroad operations between Spooner and Trego.

A copy of the MOA and Easement can be found in Chapter 1000.

940.3.4 Other Motor Vehicle Trails

No other motorized vehicle trails have been developed on the Washburn County Forest. This plan does not recognize a need, or a feasibility to establish trails for motorcycles,

off-road trucks or other motorized uses. These uses may pose too much risk for environmental damage and user conflict to justify any potential tourism benefit. This Plan also recognizes that as UTV's continue to be manufactured as larger and more powerful units, the County will likely need to establish maximum sizes, by Ordinance, which may be more restrictive than vehicle definitions adopted by State Statute. This Plan restricts the county from developing any of the following on County Forest:

- a. Motorcycle, dirt-bike, mini-bike trails
- b. Intensive use ATV/UTV parks (play areas)
- c. Off-road vehicle courses or trails (4 x 4 truck)
- d. Trail system specifically for or allowing e-bikes

945 RECREATION RELATED PERMITS

The following permits may apply to recreational trail and facility development or rehabilitation projects:

945.1 STORM WATER DISCHARGE

In general, any trail construction or rehabilitation activities that disturb one acre or more of land will require a Storm Water Discharge Permit. There have been instances of inconsistent application of permit requirements statewide. In order to further define the County's understanding and implementation of permit requirements, the following currently acceptable process will be used for determining when a permit is needed:

- a. The 1-acre threshold will be determined by measuring/estimating new disturbance or disturbance of previously grass/undisturbed surfaces.
- b. Periodic grading of impervious or non-grassed trail surfaces is not considered disturbance
- c. Restoration of water filtration/diversion devices, such as sediment traps or catch basins is considered maintenance and not disturbance.
- d. Reconstruction of previously grassed ditch lines as part of trail rehabilitation is considered disturbance.
- e. For the purpose of a Storm Water Permit, the technical standards are difficult to directly apply to a linear trail system. Best Management Practices for Water Quality may be used as a substitute to these technical standards.

945.2 CHAPTER 30

Permits are required for bridges or culvert crossings of navigable waterways. These permits will either be classified as general or individual depending on site conditions. These permits are not required for culvert or bridge crossings of non-navigable or intermittent streams, nor are they required to install a clear span bridge over wetlands.

945.3 WETLAND FILL

Permits are required at any time that fill is placed in wetlands. Permits are available to fill small wetlands for recreation trail purposes. Wetland fill must be less than 10,000 square feet and the permit does not require wetland mitigation. Clear span bridge and boardwalks placed on pilings generally do not require a wetland fill permit. Puncheon style bridges do require a wetland fill permit.

950 RECREATION PROGRAM FUNDING AND GRANTS

950.1 FUNDING FOR RECREATION FACILITIES OR AREAS

Program funding for recreation facilities, such as campgrounds and parks, are generally fee based. Revenues generated from camping registration and other fees help offset costs of operation. Funds are available through the Aid for Development of Local Parks (ADLP) program for facility develop or enhancement. Competition for these grants is very high and grant awards to Washburn County are somewhat infrequent. Cost share matches for ADLP and funding for other projects may also be secured from timber revenue.

950.2 RECREATION TRAIL FUNDING

950.2.1 Non-Motorized Trail Systems

At the time of the Plan draft, there is very limited access to any grant funds that will assist with non-motorized recreational trail maintenance. Funds are allocated to certain trail maintenance activities directly from timber sale revenues in the budget. At this time there are no user generated fees associated with non-motorized trail systems.

950.2.2 Motorized Trail Systems

There are numerous grant programs available to fund motorized trail system development and maintenance. In general, the County currently does not budget any non-grant funds to motorized trail maintenance. Washburn County utilizes the following motorized grant funding sources:

- a. State Snowmobile Maintenance Funds

- b. ATV/UTV Summer Maintenance
- c. ATV Winter Maintenance
- d. UTV Winter Maintenance
- e. ATV/UTV and Snowmobile Rehabilitation
- f. ATV/UTV and Snowmobile Development
- g. Troute Maintenance
- h. Recreational Trail Aids grants

955 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RECREATION PROGRAM

955.1 ENFORCEMENT

Washburn County currently assigns a full time Sheriff's Department Deputy as a Recreation Officer. The position is supervised by the Sheriff, but the day to day enforcement duties are established by the Forest Administrator. This Plan recognizes that this position is critical to County recreation programs and provides for the safety of recreational users on the forest. This Plan also recognizes that this full time position is the minimum level necessary for providing an adequate and appropriate level of law enforcement on the County Forest and associated recreational trails and facilities.

955.2 STAFFING NEEDS

As of 2020, Washburn County's Recreation staff consists of a full time Assistant Recreation Administrator, as the program manager under the Forest Administrator, and ½ full time equivalent (FTE) allocated to parks and recreation operations from the Natural Resources Technician. Washburn County also employs an LTE Groundskeeper position and 2 parks caretaker/host positions at Totogatic during the camping season. The two Forestry Technician positions are allocated to assist with parks projects as necessary.

With the Totogatic Park expansion project that is underway as of 2020, along with the ever increasing recreational demands and uses on the Forest, this Plan recognizes adding a minimum of 0.5 FTE directly to the recreation program by the year 2023 and another 1.0 FTE by 2025. This Plan also identifies a need to develop another Campground Host to help manage the campground expansion area.

955.3 CAMPGROUNDS

At the time of this Plan drafting, an expansion project is underway at Totogatic Park. Phase 1 of this project includes the addition of approximately 30 sites. The proposed development also includes the ability to add up to 50 or more sites. This Plan recommends evaluating usage at the Park and adding more capacity at such time that usage warrants. This Plan also provides for the following general campground recommendations:

1. Redevelop/redesign nature trail at Totogatic Park.
2. Improve directional signage (from Highways) to both Sawmill and Totogatic Parks.
3. Registration booth/kiosk at entrance to Totogatic Park.
4. Restore the old shelter building at Totogatic Park.
5. Develop some type of firewood vending at Sawmill Park.
6. Develop campground host position for Sawmill Park.
7. Add a sanitary dump station and other amenities at Harmon Lake
8. Ensure that all campgrounds are licensed as appropriate.
9. Continue to assist municipalities with ATV campgrounds and potential future expansion. (Minong, Shell Lake)
10. Upgrade amenities at Sawmill, especially the pavilion and dock

Other recommendations may be found in the Washburn County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

955.4 YOUTH CAMP

The Leisure Lake Youth Camp receives a great deal of use and is in high demand. The facility is, however, quite old and beginning to show its age. By policy, the County has operated this facility on a suggested donation basis, primarily due to determinations that the kitchen would need to meet certain inspection standards if it were fee based. This Plan identifies a need to rectify the kitchen issues as well as upgrading the facility as follows:

1. Develop bathroom facilities that include running water and possibly showers.
2. Renovate the kitchen facility in the main lodge with new appliances cabinets, water heater, etc.
3. Install tile, or other flooring in the main lodge
4. Repair/restore the rock fireplace
5. Repair any deteriorating foundations and update/repair cabins.
6. Provide for more feasible access to the cabins uphill from the main lodge. It may be feasible to construct road access from the ball field area and a parking area closer to the cabins.

7. Upgrade electrical
8. Work with the Town of Casey to upgrade entrance road
9. General remodeling and upgrades
10. Restructure usage fees to increase revenues at the facility.

955.5 TRAILS

1. Work towards establishing a better working relationship with Ice Age Trail organizations and developing a better support system for trail management/maintenance.
2. Monitor trail use for invasive species introduction. Attempt eradication/management of invasives and develop regulations as necessary to minimize risk of additional infestations.
3. Consider reopening Hallstrom Woods as non-motorized trail system (mountain bike/ski).
4. Consider reopening Leisure Lake Ski Trail.
5. Consider expanding grooming operations at one of the ski trails to accommodate skating/freestyle skiing.
6. Make attempts to secure a reliable funding source for non-motorized trail systems, including developing trail or parking passes.
7. Continue to maintain and consider upgrading nature trails and canoe portage trails.
8. Work towards ATV/UTV trail connections as identified within this Chapter.

955.6 OTHER RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Periodically review undesignated uses, both motorized and non-motorized, to determine need for additional regulations.
2. Periodically review use of undesignated boat launches to determine repair needs
3. Clarify jurisdiction of boat landings (County, Town, State)
4. Continue to research mechanisms to exercise reversionary clause at Ernie Swift Youth Camp and develop or find a non-profit program to utilize the facility
5. Add bathrooms and other amenities at ski trail and mountain bike trail parking areas
6. Evaluate certain sites that once had cabin permits to allow for dispersed camping with hard side campers (larger than tent as identified in Ordinance).
7. Add sanitary dump station and other amenities at horse trails
8. Consider adding campground host at Sawmill Park

The Washburn County Forest Outdoor Recreation Plan contains more detailed information on recreation program recommendations