

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 900

RECREATION

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900 RECREATION

Recreation is an integral part of the management of the Lincoln County Forest and recreation uses are referenced in most of the previous chapters. Due to the tremendous growth in recreational demands over the duration of the last planning period, this Plan recognizes the importance of more intensive recreational planning and emphasizes its importance with a separate chapter.

905 PLANNING

In addition to this Plan, the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan also guides the recreation program. The Recreation Plan is revised every five years and is made part of this Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan includes, but is not limited to, activities on the County Forest. It incorporates snowmobile and ATV plans, 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 Lincoln County Code of Ordinances and s. 28.11 Wis. Stats, authorize the Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee to provide recreational opportunities for the public. This authority is further recognized in the mission statement for the County Forest Plan (Chapter 100), which specifically identifies outdoor recreational opportunities. This mission statement also charges the Committee to conduct activities in a manner that prevents or minimizes environmental damage.

Maps of the recreational facilities managed through the Lincoln County Forest program are appended or referenced in Chapter 1000.

915 ENTRANCE AND USER FEES

The Committee is empowered and shall have responsibility for establishing entrance, camping and other user fees on recreational facilities maintained by the County Forest.

Camping, entrance or other fees shall be comparable to fees charged by other adjacent counties and are subject to periodic change by the Committee. Fees, where appropriate, will be utilized to assist in the maintenance of recreational facilities.

920 RECREATIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

It is permissible for the Committee to contract with clubs or individuals to provide for recreational maintenance or services to the public. As part of the Plan, the County contracts for the following services

1. Snowmobile and winter ATV trail grooming and maintenance
2. Assistance with summer ATV trail brushing and signing

925 RECREATIONAL USE PERMITS FOR ORGANIZED EVENTS

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 by the Committee provided the use is consistent with management activities and will not cause resource damage. Appropriate levels of event liability insurance are required.

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. These uses do not require a permit but must be conducted in compliance with ordinance. The Forest Administrator and the Committee shall periodically review such uses and enact ordinances as necessary to protect from resource damage.

930.1 HUNTING

The entire County Forest is open for regulated hunting, with the exception of areas developed for high public use and the Roothouse Lake Area, north of Bear Trail Road.

The Lincoln County Code of Ordinances regulates activities relating to hunting. Refer to Chapter 1000 for a full text of the Ordinance. In general the following are regulated: Tree stands/blinds, trail cameras, motorized (ATV) game retrieval.

930.2 FISHING

All lakes and streams within the forest are available for fishing unless otherwise listed in state regulations.

930.3 PICNICKING / DAY USE

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

1. All litter, trash or rubbish must be removed
2. Cutting or harvesting vegetation is not permitted
3. Fires may not be left unattended
4. Other County rules and regulations are observed.

930.4 CAMPING

Overnight camping, including tents, trailers, cars and trucks, portable hunting or fishing cabins, may be permitted in the County Forest outside of designated camping areas without charge for a period not to exceed 14 days cumulative time in any given calendar year. Camping on the County Forest must be for recreational purposes only. No person may reside on County Forest land. Camping on the County Forest as a means of establishing a place of residence is not allowed. Any person who violates the rules and regulations of this chapter or of good conduct, including without limitation cutting or defacing timber, carelessness with fire, violation of game and fishing laws of the State, or improper disposal of garbage and litter, disorderly conduct, or threatening behavior shall be subject to ejection from the County Forest and subject to the penalties provided by County and State law.

930.5 MOTORIZED TRAVEL

The Lincoln County Code of Ordinances regulates motorized uses on the County Forest. The full text of these regulations is included in Chapter 1000. In general the following regulations apply to motorized travel outside of a developed recreational trail system.

1. All County Forest roads, trails and fire lanes that are cabled, gated, rocked, bermed, signed, stumped or closed by another means by the direction of the County Forestry, Land and Parks Administrator shall be closed to all vehicular travel, except by written permission of the Administrator.
 - a) During the bear harvest season, ATVs may be used behind gates, rocks and berms to extract a downed bear from the Lincoln County Forest. The downed bear must be located prior to operating ATVs in restricted area. Hunters must call the Sheriff's Office at 715-536-6272 and report the following information: Wisconsin DNR Customer Number and general location of the site of extraction prior to the use of ATV(s) in these restricted areas.
 - b) During the deer archery season, ATVs may be used behind gates, rocks and berms to extract a downed deer from the Lincoln County Forest. The downed deer must be located prior to operation of ATVs in restricted areas. Hunters must call the Sheriff's Office at 715-536-6272 and report the following information: Wisconsin DNR Customer Number and general location of the site of extraction prior to the use of ATVs in these restricted areas.
 - c) During all deer rifle harvest seasons, ATVs may be used behind gates, rocks and berms to extract a downed deer from the Lincoln County Forest. The downed deer must be located prior to the use of ATVs in these restricted areas.
2. No unauthorized person shall ride a horse, bike or drive a motorized vehicle on any secondary road under the jurisdiction of the Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Department between the dates of March 31 and May 1 or when posted closed.
3. No person shall operate any motorized vehicle off from any approved snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle trail or established secondary road. This activity, commonly referred to as "cross country travel", is strictly prohibited on any Lincoln County Forest property.

4. No person shall cause destruction to any natural growth (unless authorized), cause erosion, rutting, damage a stream, lake bed or wetland or do any other type of environmental degradation.
5. No person shall operate any unregistered or unlicensed motor vehicle on any County Forest road, route, trail or lake.
6. Only street-legal and licensed motorcycles, driven by licensed operators, are allowed on the all-terrain vehicle trails.

930.6 TRAPPING

The entire County Forest is open for DNR regulated trapping, with the exception of areas developed for high public use and the Roothouse Lake Area, north of Bear Trail Road. Use of motorized vehicles for trapping is restricted to areas designated open for their use.

930.7 OTHER USES

Other uses of the County Forest are permitted provided they are not specifically addressed with the County Code of Ordinances. Mountain Biking, Horseback riding, X-C skiing and other non-motorized uses on designated trails in the Underdown Recreational Area require a user permit. The County Board may, at any time, enact ordinances to protect the forest should damage begin to occur.

935 DESIGNATED RECREATION AREAS/USES

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

The Committee and Forestry Department has noted a marked increase in demand for recreation facilities. Lincoln County may attempt to develop additional facilities and will maintain its currently developed facilities to the greatest extent possible.

935.1 CAMPGROUNDS

935.1.1 Otter Lake Recreation Area

Otter Lake Recreation Area is located at N8896 Otter Lake Road, Irma, WI. The park facilities include 25 rustic campsites, 2 hand water pumps, 2 pit toilets, beach, changing house, boat landing, firewood with paid camping fee, and a nature trail. The facility is fee based for camping and no fee for day use.

935.1.2 Camp New Wood Recreation Area

Camp New Wood Recreation Area is located at N4715 State Road 107, Merrill, WI. The park facilities include 7 rustic campsites, hand water pump, 2 pit toilets, boat landing, firewood with paid camping fee and access to the Ice Age Trail.

935.1.3 Underdown Campground

Underdown Campground is located at W3221 Copper Lake Road, Irma, WI. The park facilities include 11 rustic campsites set up for camping units with horse trailers, hand water pump, pit toilet, shelter house and access to single track bike, equestrian, X-C skiing, fat bike, snowshoe and the Ice Age Trail.

935.2 PICNIC / DAY USE AREAS

1. Tug Lake County Park
2. Otter Lake Recreation Area
3. Camp New Wood Recreation Area
4. Haymeadow County Park
5. Larson Lake County Park

935.3 SWIMMING AREAS / BEACHES

1. Tug Lake Recreation Area
2. Otter Lake Recreation Area

935.4 BOAT LANDINGS

As a result of the wide distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the

overall Forest Access Plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest primarily for recreational activities. In addition, these water access points also provide water supply points for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structural fires.

The existing water access points will be maintained to provide a place to launch a small fishing boat or canoe. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. These landings are built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

935.4.1 Public Boat Access Sites Maintained by the County

A listing of public boat access sites developed for carry in or trailer launching on the Lincoln Forest and open to public use can be found in Section 1015.1.

935.4.2 Public Boat Access Sites Maintained by Towns within close proximity to the County Forest

1. Tug Lake (Rock Falls)
2. Echo Lake (Russell)
3. Pickerel Lake (Harrison)
4. Seven Island Lake (Harrison)
5. Penny Lake (Wilson)
6. Hilts Lake (Harrison)
7. Pine Lake (Harrison)

935.4.3 Undeveloped Water Access Points

Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe. All new sites for developed water access must be reviewed and approved by the Committee.

940 DESIGNATED RECREATION TRAILS

Designated recreation trails are those for which the County provides a designated trail and/or facility. The County currently provides trail systems that accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. The Committee may prohibit other activities on these trails that are not compatible with the intent of the development.

Whenever possible, multiple uses of various trail systems are encouraged and are subject to policy review of the Committee. Wherever possible, attempts will be made to avoid user conflicts. Recreational users, however, will frequently encounter forest management activities instrumental to the existence and future of the County Forest. Trail systems are identified in Chapter 1000.

940.1 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

The Lincoln County Forest is a multiple use forest. Non-motorized recreation trails are a legitimate use of the forest. Design and maintenance of these trails may highlight natural features present on the Forest, should minimize damage, and reduce user conflict. Trail use and development must be compatible and sustainable with the characteristics of the landscape.

It is the policy of the Committee to manage non-motorized recreation trails on the County Forest.

940.1.1 Hiking Trails

All recreational trails and roads are open to use by hikers. Five segments of Ice Age Trail also traverse through the county forest and are maintained by the Northwood's Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. The Hiawatha Trail travels 6.6 miles from Tomahawk to Oneida County and connects with the Bearskin trail. In addition, a nature trail and boardwalk is available around Otter Lake at the Otter Lake Recreation Area. These facilities are both maintained by the County.

940.1.2 Mountain Bike/Fat Tire/Bicycle Trails

Bicycle use is permitted on all recreational trails except for winter-use trails with the exception that Fat-Tire Bike trails run in conjunction with the snowshoe trails during the winter season. A 33-mile single track and Fat-Tire bike trail system is maintained by user

groups in the Underdown Recreation Block which connects to trails in the Merrill Memorial Forest.

940.1.3 Equestrian Trails

Equestrian Use is allowed on most open roads or trails except for the Ice Age Trail. Designated Equestrian Trails feature a 22 mile system with various shortcuts and cutoffs which are maintained by user groups at the Underdown Recreation Area.

940.1.4 Ski Trails

A classic cross country ski trail system consisting of 3.6, 7.7 and 11 mile interlocking loops of marked and groomed trails with various cutoffs are maintained at the Underdown Recreation Area. These trails are groomed weekly as conditions permit during the ski season.

940.1.5 Snowshoe Trails

Packed snowshoe trails are maintained by user groups at the Underdown Recreation Area. This 7.6 mile trail consists of 4 loops which range from 1.6 to 7.3 miles in length.

940.1.6 Future non-motorized trail systems

The development of additional non-motorized trail systems will include careful consideration of public demand, analysis of user conflicts and potential damage to the natural resource. Trail system development should comply with the Outdoor Recreation Plan goals and be referenced in SCORP or other regional planning documents.

Non-motorized trail systems generally are not supported by statewide grant programs. The County may require proof of a club, or user group as being an organized entity, with the ability to assist with maintenance and support of the trail and associated facilities. Appropriate trail passes, or other user fees, may be implemented as indicated in Section 905.

940.2 MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

940.2.1 Designated Snowmobile Trails

Designated snowmobile trails are those recognized by the Committee as the official trails within the County. The Forestry, Land and Parks Department manages the snowmobile trail system in Lincoln County. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance and insurance obligations between the County and local clubs. The County contracts with the following snowmobile/ATV clubs for trail maintenance: Devil's Creek Stump Jumpers, Copper River Midnight Riders, Rock Island X-Press, L&L Tree Dodgers, Rock Falls Snow Drifters, Knight Owls, and Northwoods Passage.

The Lincoln County Code regulates snowmobile trails. A summary of rules and regulations relating to snowmobile trails can be found in the County Forest and Recreational Trails Ordinance located in Chapter 1000-Appendix.

Lincoln County recognizes the following categories of snowmobile trail:

940.2.1.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of snowmobile trail:

State Funded Trails – these are state approved and funded trail miles on designated trails that are part of a statewide network of trail systems. Snowmobile registration fees and gas tax allotments fund grants that support maintenance, rehabilitation and development of these trails. There are approximately 290 miles of funded trails in Lincoln County, with approximately 80 miles on County Forest Lands.

Unfunded Trails – these are segments of trail that meet the eligibility requirements for a funded trail system but have not been included in the grant system due to restrictions on available funding. There are approximately 34.6 miles of unfunded trails in Lincoln County, with approximately 10.6 miles on County Forest lands. It is recommended that the county continues to apply for grants to include these in the funded system.

Local/Club Trails – these are trails that are not funded by State maintenance grants and may or may not be groomed by local clubs. These trails may not meet eligibility requirements of a funded trail and may dead end at local businesses. There are approximately 61 miles of club trails in Lincoln County, with approximately 3.4 miles on County Forest lands.

940.2.1.2 Trail Maintenance

Lincoln County contracts with 7 local snowmobile clubs to groom the funded snowmobile trail system. The County periodically assists various trail maintenance projects as needed.

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

940.2.1.3 Future Snowmobile Trails

The Committee shall have jurisdiction over any trail development proposals. It is recommended that future trails be considered only after careful consideration of costs, benefits and impacts and as part of a larger planning effort.

Proposals to relocate trails or to make adjustments to the existing trail system will be encouraged where there are concerns of public safety or environmental damage. Unfunded and club trails should be evaluated for maintenance funding application where appropriate.

940.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

Designated ATV Trails are those recognized by the Committee as official trails within the County. These may lie on County, private, or other agency lands. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance and insurance obligations between the County and local clubs.

There are numerous types of designated ATV trails managed by Lincoln County. These trails are further identified in the appendix.

940.2.2.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of ATV trail. Maps are appended for reference.

1. Funded Winter ATV Trails – A majority of state funded snowmobile trails on the County Forest are also designated and funded as winter use ATV trails. There are approximately 223 miles of winter funded ATV trail managed by Lincoln County, with 70 miles on County Forest lands.

2. Funded Summer ATV Trails – these are trail systems funded for only spring/summer/fall use. These trails are open from May 1 – Nov. or Dec 1 unless posted closed. There are approximately 48 miles of summer use ATV trails managed by the County with 45.7 miles on the County Forest.

4. Funded UTV Trails – UTV's, or side by sides, can be allowed on ATV trail systems. Lincoln County allows for UTV's on 48 miles of the summer ATV trail system within the County.

5. Funded Troute/Hybrid Trails – The ATV/UTV program does not allow for full maintenance funding on ATV/UTV trails that are open to highway traffic (cars, trucks, etc.) ATV trails with this dual use that were maintained and funded prior to August 1, 2012 are still funded at 100% of the annual per mile maintenance rate. Lincoln County has 44.4 miles of its funded summer ATV trail system that fit into this category and are fully funded as a Troute. Trails funded after August 1, 2012 will allow for partial funding under the following categories:

5a. County Forest Gas Tax Roads – these are gas tax roads used as a connector to trails or services and are funded at a rate determined by the full per mile funding rate, less gas tax funding rate, not to exceed 50% of the full maintenance funding rate. Lincoln County maintains 1 mile of County Forest Road classified as a Troute.

5b. Hybrid Trails – these are trails designated as ATV trails, opened after August 1, 2012, that also permit highway vehicle traffic. These are funded at

50% of the annual maintenance funding rate. Lincoln County does not maintain any miles of 50% funded Hybrid/Troute trails.

940.2.2.2 ATV Trail Maintenance

For the purpose of ATV trails, the term sustainability is intended to mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident there are no circumstances where an ATV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and eliminates the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity, causing erosion.

The County contracts with 5 snowmobile clubs for winter ATV trail maintenance. Summer ATV trail maintenance is conducted by the Lincoln County Forestry Dept. Assistance with signing and brushing of the summer ATV trail is contracted out to the Harrison Hills ATV Club.

The County shall inspect and monitor trails, bridges and other infrastructure and attempt to secure funding from grants, or other sources, to periodically replace improvements or rehabilitate trail surfaces or bridges as needed.

940.2.2.3 Future ATV Trails

The use and popularity of ATV's and UTV's increased dramatically over the period of the 2006-2020 County Forest Plan. Increased usage of trail systems proved a tremendous need for much higher levels of trail maintenance in order to manage environmental damages.

Adding ATV trails should be done as part of larger planning effort that incorporates considerations for impact on other users and user groups; how future trail systems will be maintained; and impact on the natural resources. New ATV trail systems will only be considered with the following framework:

- Trails should be designed and planned to connect communities
- Loop trails will be discouraged unless part of a larger trail system that connects communities

- Dead end trails will not be sanctioned as part of the County ATV trail system
- Intensive use areas on county forest property will not be recommended due to conflicts with county forest crop law and forest certification requirements.
- New trails will only be allowed if they fit within an ATV plan established by the Committee
- Trails will only be considered on suitable soils and in appropriate locations. It is critical that trail layout and design is done in such a way as to prevent erosion and soil loss. Trails must be sustainably developed. For the purpose of this plan, sustainability is defined as follows:

Sustainability – For the purpose of ATV trails, the term sustainability is intended to mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident there are no circumstances where an ATV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and eliminates the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity, causing erosion. Trails should be built with a slight crown and appropriate ditching to allow for adequate and proper water dispersal.

To this end, the construction and development of new ATV trails are to comply with the **WCFA ATV/ORV Trail Standards**, which is located in Chapter 1010.20 of this Plan.

940.3 RECREATION TRAIL PERMITS

940.3.1 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 current acceptable process will be used for determining when a permit is needed.

- The 1 acre threshold will be determined by measuring/estimated new disturbance or disturbance of previously vegetated surfaces.
- Periodic grading of impervious or non-grassed trail surfaces is not considered disturbance.
- Restoration of water filtration/diversion devices, such as sediment traps or catch basins is considered maintenance and not disturbance
- Reconstruction of previously grassed ditch lines as part of trail rehabilitation is considered disturbance.

940.3.2 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 specific 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.

940.3.3 Wetland Fill

Permits are required at any time that fill is placed in a wetland. 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 permit.

945 RECREATION PROGRAM FUNDING AND GRANTS

945.1 RECREATION AREA FUNDING

Funding for recreation areas is generally fee based, or paid for by timber sale revenue. Aid for Development of Local Parks (ADLP) funding is available for facility development or enhancement, but there is normally a very high level of competition for these funds.

945.2 RECREATION TRAIL FUNDING

945.2.1 Non-motorized trail systems

At this time, there is very limited access to any grant funds that will assist with non-motorized recreational trail maintenance. The County relies on trail passes, timber sale revenue, grants and donations from user groups as funding mechanisms for these programs.

945.2.2 Motorized trail systems

There are numerous grant programs available to offset motorized trail system costs.

Lincoln County utilizes the following funding sources:

1. Snowmobile Maintenance - \$300/mile
2. ATV Summer Maintenance - \$600/mile
3. ATV Winter Maintenance - \$100/mile
4. UTV Maintenance - \$200/mile
5. ATV Rehabilitation - 100% grants
6. ATV Development - 100% grants
7. Troute, Maintenance – < \$100/mile

950 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RECREATION PROGRAM

The following are recommended changes that this Plan recognizes as improvements or enhancements to the recreation program.

950.1 ENFORCEMENT NEEDS

Outdoor recreational activity has continued to increase to all seasons on the county forest with an increased number of participants. The recreation officer position is a full time, certified Sheriff's Deputy that is dedicated to the enforcement of resource related laws and ordinances. This position is able to work odd hours and weekends to address illegal activities and vandalism that occur to help alleviate these problems. This position has made Lincoln County a more desirable place to recreate and has helped preserve our valuable resources so future generations can enjoy the same opportunities that we have today.

950.2 STAFF NEEDS

As recreational use continues to grow, and new uses and demands develop, existing staff may not be able to manage the expanded services and programs on the County Forest at current staffing or funding levels. Additional personnel and funding may be necessary to properly administrate, maintain and enhance the recreational activities that the county is responsible for managing.