

Initial Scoping Document for the Blue Mound State Park Master Plan



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has initiated a planning process to revise the master plan for Blue Mound State Park. The purpose of this document is provide initial information to aid the public and DNR staff in understanding the existing conditions at Blue Mound State Park and how the park fits into a broader regional picture of resource and recreation management.



About This Document

Pages 1 - 4 of this document give a brief overview of Blue Mound State Park and considerations for planning and management of the park. Outlining considerations for planning and management serves two purposes:

- The public and DNR planning team is informed of known issues and conditions that should be addressed during the planning process.
- The public is given the opportunity, through public comment, to add to the considerations that should be addressed during the planning process.

The remaining pages (5 - 20) are more technical information that offer a summary of the background property and regional information that led to the considerations listed in the opening pages.

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Introduction

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has initiated a planning process to revise the master plan for Blue Mound State Park. The purpose of this document is to aid the public and DNR staff in understanding the existing conditions at Blue Mound State Park and how the park fits into a broader regional picture of resource and recreation management.

Overview of Blue Mound State Park

Blue Mound State Park (BMSP) encompasses 1,153 acres atop the highest point in Southern Wisconsin, straddling the Dane and Iowa County line in southwest Wisconsin. The majority of the park's acreage, approximately 930 acres, falls in the Town of Brigham in Iowa County, with the rest in the Town of Blue Mounds and Village of Blue Mounds in Dane County. The park offers over 20 miles of scenic trails for hiking, off-road bicycling and cross-country skiing. The park also features camping and a swimming pool and splashpad. For those travelling to the park via the adjacent Military Ridge State Trail a bike or hike-to campground is also located in the park.

Blue Mound State Park is in Wisconsin's Driftless Area, a region untouched by glaciers for at least the past 2.4 million years. Blue Mound, for which the park is named, towers several hundred feet above its surroundings. The mound is capped by hard Niagara dolomite preventing the erosion that, over the past 400 million years, cut down the surrounding limestone and sandstone areas. Today, the park hosts natural communities composed of many of southwestern Wisconsin's iconic species. Over the course of the year, 150 bird species, deer, fox, bats, and many other mammals and insects, including some that are rare, share the park with visitors.

Regionally, Blue Mound State Park plays an important role in DNR's recreation and resource management efforts. Blue Mound State Park offers recreation facilities similar to many of the 16 state parks in the region. It is quite popular due to the park's topography, scenic beauty, proximity to Madison and variety of trail-based recreational offerings. Camping and mountain biking are premier offerings. Ecologically, Blue Mound State Park is primarily located in the Southwest Savanna ecological landscape and contains several natural communities for which there are major or important conservation opportunities, including Oak Woodland and Southern Mesic Forest. Habitat capable of hosting several species of greatest conservation need is also present.



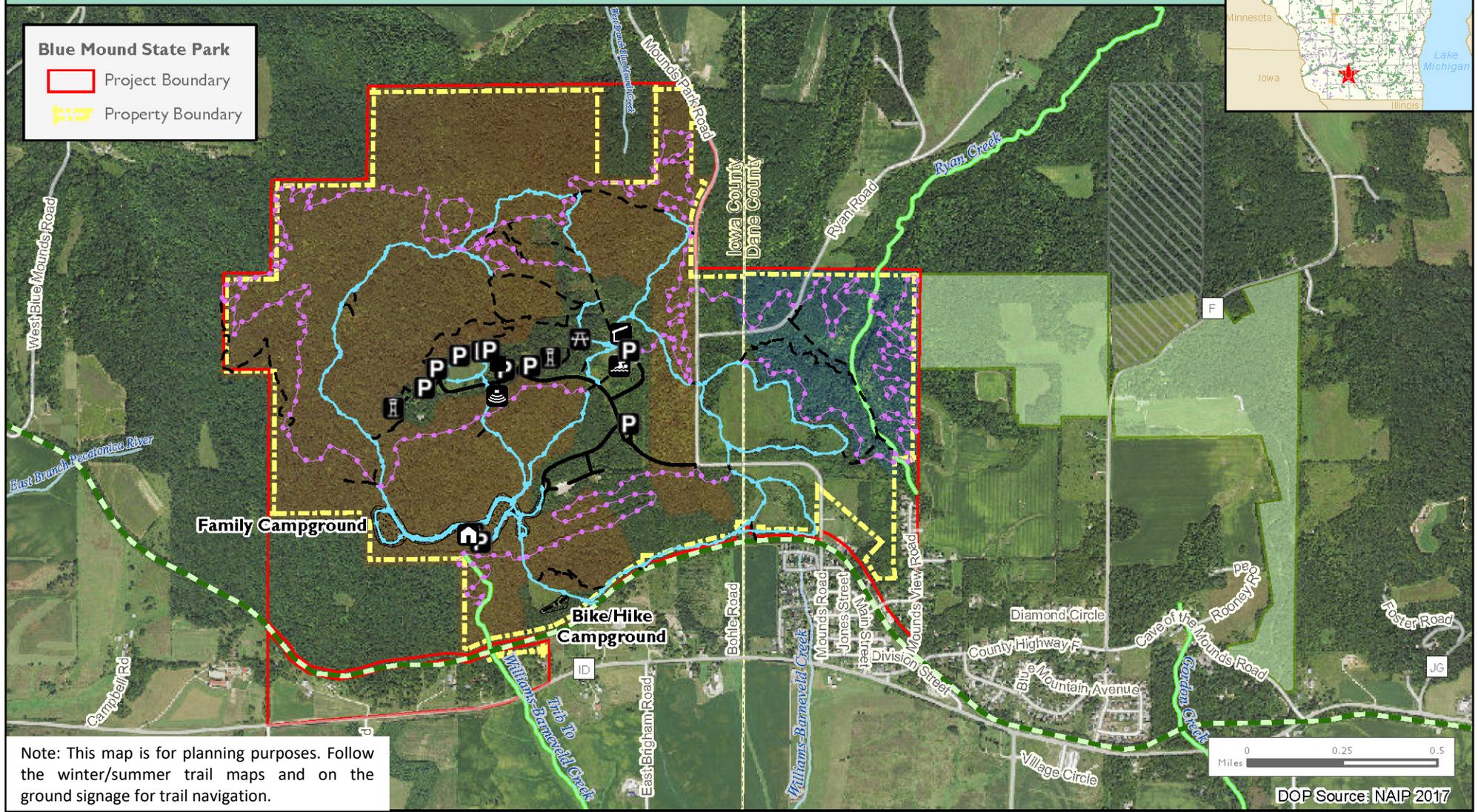
Blue Mound State Park

EXISTING CONDITIONS



Blue Mound State Park

- Project Boundary
- Property Boundary



Brigham County Park	Primary Sites	Park Facilities	Day Use Area	Mayberry Cabin	Trails
Blue Mounds County Wildlife Area	Blue Mound Woods	Parking	Pool and Splash Pad	Campground	Mountain Bike Trail
	Pleasure Valley Woods	Observation Tower	Picnic Area	DNR Road Open to Motorized Use	Ski Trail
	Trout Stream	Friends Shelter	Outdoor Amphitheater		Hiking Trail
	CLASS II				Military Ridge State Trail

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Considerations for Planning and Management

As the Blue Mound State Park DNR planning team conducts its work, it will consider the important niche the park occupies in terms of recreation and resource management. This section presents an overview of considerations for DNR's planning team during its planning efforts. The considerations are drawn from DNR staff expertise as well as:

- Past planning efforts and public input
- Existing property-level and public use and recreation opportunities (page 6) and resource (page 9) conditions
- Existing regional-scale resource (page 13) and recreation opportunities and conditions (page 19).

Blue Mound State Park Planning History

The original Blue Mound State Park master plan, the "[Blue Mound State Park Master Plan Concept Element](#)," was developed in 1984 prior to the adoption of ch. NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code (NR 44). The plan was subsequently changed in 2000 and 2012 through the NR 44 variance process to allow for additional [non-motorized trail development \(2000\)](#) and for development of an [enclosed trailhead shelter \(2012\)](#).

In 2014, DNR received a request to reopen a historical snowmobile trail through the park. After extensive study of the property in terms of ecological and recreation needs, the department submitted an amendment to the BMSP master plan to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) for approval. The amendment recommended several trail system modifications intended to make the overall system more sustainable, and included a snowmobile trail paralleling Mounds Park Road. The trails amendment was approved in January 2016. In January 2017, following significant public interest and concerns that members of the public were not given adequate opportunity to provide input, the NRB reconsidered the amendment and again approved the document. In October 2017 the Dane County Circuit Court reversed and remanded the plan amendment back to the department for further action consistent with the requirements of NR 44. In June 2018, the NRB directed DNR to undertake a master plan revision under NR 44. This document represents the start of the revision process.

Considerations for Recreation and Public Use Planning and Management

The property's wide array of natural resources and proximity to a major urban center make Blue Mound State Park a popular destination for recreation and public use. In planning recreation and public use at the park, the planning team will consider a variety of informational inputs including, but not limited to:

- DNR staff expertise
- Ecological characteristics and management opportunities
- Public input through current and past planning efforts
- Existing facilities, the experiences they offer, and their use
- Recreational offerings at nearby non-DNR properties and opportunities to link the park with them
- The Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) findings related to regional needs and priorities

Many people participate in cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and hiking in Blue Mound State Park. This has led to significant public interest in past BMSP planning efforts. The current planning process to revise the BMSP management plan will review existing opportunities for these activities and may identify additional opportunities to improve user experiences. The DNR planning team may also consider other recreational needs of the region as it plans future public use of the park.

Connections to planned or existing complementary recreation facilities to those in Blue Mound State Park may be considered during the planning process. These may include two opportunities for connections to trails, first proposed during previous planning efforts:

- A snowmobile connector trail from the Military Ridge State Trail to the regional trail network on private lands north of the park. Snowmobiles currently use the Mound Park Road right-of-way for this connection.
- A mountain bike connection to Brigham County Park from the Overlode Mountain Bike Trail.



Considerations for Natural Resources Planning and Management

Blue Mound State Park contains a diverse array of natural communities, at least five of which are noted as major or important opportunities for management in the Southwest Savanna ecological landscape (Table 8). The Southern Dry and Southern Dry-mesic forest communities are in moderate to good condition at Blue Mound State Park. Dry Prairie and Oak Woodland are both major conservation opportunities for the Southwest Savanna but their occurrences in BMSP are currently either small or degraded. The DNR planning team may consider opportunities to manage for the expansion or improvement of these natural communities. Impacts on rare or threatened species may also be considered.

Similarly, several of DNR's top priority habitats for southern Wisconsin are present in the park. These include old forests, oak forest, oak savanna and woodland and remnant and historic prairie in historic prairie areas (Table 7). These priority habitats overlap with the natural communities noted in Table 8. In considering management of both, the planning team may assess if Blue Mound State Park is a viable area to manage for these habitats and communities or if other areas within the landscape are better targets for management.

Ryan Creek is one of the few water resources present in the park, but it is an Exceptional Resource Water and a Class II trout stream. Ephemeral ponds and forested seeps are relatively rare in this landscape. Potential opportunities to protect these high-quality water resources may be considered by the planning team as management strategies are considered.

Overall Considerations

Blue Mound State Park is a popular property with many existing facilities and uses. Reviewing these existing uses and exploring opportunities to improve them while meeting regional recreation and ecological needs is an important focus of this planning process.

It is also important to note that past planning efforts at this property have yielded significant public interest. The planning team may consider past public involvement, as well input gathered during this process, as it plans for the park's future. All planning decisions will be made with an eye toward producing a final plan that is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable and will serve the park and its users well for years to come.

How These Considerations Were Identified

The considerations noted in this document were formed from a variety of sources. The remainder of this document gives a summary of the existing property and regional conditions that also led to these considerations. Read on to learn more about Blue Mound State Park and its regional setting.





Existing Recreation Conditions at Blue Mound State Park

Existing public use facilities at Blue Mound State Park are described in this section. Property conditions noted here help the DNR planning team understand Blue Mound State Park’s role in meeting regional resource and recreation needs now and in the future.

Public Use and Recreation at Blue Mound State Park

Blue Mound State Park, with its abundance of recreation opportunities, is a popular recreation destination. Campgrounds, day use areas, trails and other public use facilities are all well used. Their use and management will be evaluated during the planning process to determine future use and development levels.

Camping

Camping in Blue Mound State Park is split between one family-style campground, one bike/hike campground, and Mayberry Cabin, an accessible cabin for people with disabilities. Further details are shown in Table 1.



Table 1. Camping at Blue Mound State Park

Camping Opportunity	Number of Sites	Campground Overview
Family Campground	78	All sites at the family campground are auto-accessible. Electrical receptacles are present on 31 of the sites and one site is designated for administrative use. Two of the sites are also ADA accessible sites. The campground also contains a flush toilet facility and two playgrounds.
Bike/Hike-To Campground	12	Located ¼ mile south of the main campground, the Bike/Hike-To Campground is accessible by either foot or bicycle/
Mayberry Cabin	1	The Mayberry Accessible Cabin is available for people with disabilities. It has a paved driveway, electrical outlets and lighting, as well as an accessible picnic table and fire ring. The cabin can be reserved from May 25 - October 15 of each year.

Day Use Areas

People gather and participate in a variety of recreational activities in the park’s day use areas. Blue Mound State Park’s two day use areas are the Picnic Day Use Area and the Swimming Pool and Splash Pad Day Use Area. The Picnic Day Use Area contains open shelters, two observation towers, an amphitheater, grills, horseshoe pits and an open field. The Swimming Pool and Splashpad Day Use Area contains a pool, splashpad, changing facilities, picnic tables and grills and an enclosed shelter. Trail head areas are also present.

Trails

A large network of trails crisscrosses Blue Mound State Park, offering a variety of uses and difficulty levels. All trails are open to hiking in the spring, summer and fall seasons. In the winter, all trails are open to snowshoeing and hiking unless they are groomed for cross-country ski use.

Table 2. Blue Mound State Park Trails

Trail Name	Length*	Summer Use	Winter Use
Basalt & Pepper MBT	1.3 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Campground Loop	1.8 miles	-	Cross-country skiing
Chert Dip MBT	1.2 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Flint Rock Nature Trail	1.6 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Gneiss & Smooth MBT	1 mile	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Green Loop	0.3 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Holy Schist MBT	3.2 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Home Stretch MBT	0.7 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Indian Tree Marker Trail	0.8 miles	Hiking	-
John Minix Trail	1.1 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Overlude MBT	3.8 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking/Snowshoeing
Picnic Trail	0.4 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Pleasure Valley Trail	2 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Pokerville MBT	1.3 miles	Mountain biking	Mountain Biking
Pool Trail	0.8 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Ridgeview Trail	1.1 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Spring House Trail	0.3 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Family Campground to Flint Rock Trail	0.2 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Walnut Hollow Trail	0.4 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing
Weeping Rock Hiking Trail	1.1 miles	Hiking	Snowshoeing
Willow Spring Trail	0.4 miles	Hiking	Cross-country skiing

*Trail length is based on DNR Geographic Information System lengths. This may vary from other reported trail lengths.



Roads and Parking Areas

Development levels and public use status (open, closed, or seasonally open) of DNR-maintained roads will be assessed during the planning process. These are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. DNR-Maintained Roads in Blue Mound State Park

Road Name	Public Use Status	Length (Miles)
Campground – sites 1-8, 12 & 13	Seasonally Open	0.17
Campground – sites 14-39	Seasonally Open	0.34
Campground – sites 40-56	Seasonally Open	0.19
Campground – Sites 57-78	Seasonally Open	0.25
Campground – sites 9-11	Seasonally Open	0.05
Campground Entrance Road	Open	0.30
DOT Tower Access Road	Closed	.08
Dump Station	Seasonally Open	0.05
East Tower Road	Open	0.11
Park Entrance Road	Open	0.35
Picnic Area Road	Open	0.55
Pool and Friends Shelter Road	Open	0.15
Road to Picnic Area	Open	0.36
Shop Access Path	Closed	0.02
Shop Access Road	Closed	0.15
West Tower Road	Open	0.14



Other Public Use, Recreation and Support Facilities

Facilities critical to carrying out the functions of Blue Mound State Park not previously noted are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Other Facilities in Blue Mound State Park

Facility Name	Description
Adirondack Shelter	A small three-sided shelter in the Hike/Bike-In Campground
Aquatics Center	The pool and splashpad facility.
Campground Toilet/Shower	Flush toilet and shower building at the family campground.
Campground Woodshed	An unheated woodshed used for general storage.
Contact Station Wood Shed	Wood bin area where park visitors may purchase firewood.
East Observation Tower	40-foot tall observation tower on the east side of the Picnic Day Use Area.
Friends Shelter	Indoor gathering facility with flush toilets, heating & air conditioning. The building is used as a meeting and interpretive facility.
Main Shelter	Open shelter located in the Picnic Day Use Area.
Nature Center	Interpretive Center for park educational programs.
Outdoor Amphitheater	Outdoor gathering venue often used for educational programs.
West Observation Tower	40-foot tall observation tower on the west side of the Picnic Day Use Area.
West Shelter	A 1950's-era shelter that is no longer in use.



Existing Natural Resource Conditions at Blue Mound State Park

The recreational facilities noted in the previous section are enhanced by the diversity of natural resources the park protects. This section describes a sample of natural resources characteristics and opportunities the planning team will consider as it forms the master plan.

Land Cover

The land cover of Blue Mound State Park (Table 5) is predominantly upland-deciduous forest made up of oak and other hardwoods, aspen and a small area of walnut. A 17-acre pine plantation is also present on the property. The remainder of the acreage is composed of upland grass and shrub or is developed.

Table 5. Blue Mound State Park Land Cover

Habitat Classification	GIS Acres	% Cover
Developed	140	12%
Oak*	670	59%
Upland Broad-leaved Deciduous Forest	196	17%
Upland Coniferous Forest	17	2%
Upland Grass	83	7%
Upland Shrub	37	3%
Total	1145	100%

*Under DNR's habitat classification system, the oak classification may refer to a variety of oak habitat types. After further assessment, the oak acres in Table 5 will be re-assigned to either Upland Broad-leaved Deciduous Forest or Oak Woodland.



Table 6. Natural Communities in Blue Mound State Park

Natural Community	Condition
Southern Dry-mesic Forest	Moderate – Good Quality
Southern Mesic Forest	Moderate – Good Quality
Dry Prairie	Small, Moderate quality
Oak Woodland	Degraded
Forested Seeps	Moderate quality
Ephemeral Ponds	Moderate quality
Shrub-carr	Low quality

Natural Communities and Priority Habitats

Natural communities and priority habitats are the bedrock ecological considerations for master planning. They offer more detail for understanding land cover than the more generalized habitat classifications in Table 5. Table 6 shows the natural communities present in Blue Mound State Park.

To help ensure its management efforts are focused effectively, DNR created a list of priority habitats for different regions of the state. The priority habitats for southern Wisconsin, their ranking (a ranking of one indicates the highest priority) and their status within Blue Mound State Park are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. DNR Southern Wisconsin Priority Habitats and their Presence in Blue Mound State Park

Southern Wisconsin Priority Habitat	Priority Rank	Status within Blue Mound State Park
Deep marsh/shallow lakes (hemi-marsh goal)	1	Not present
Emergent Wetlands (wet meadow/shallow marsh)	1	Very Limited
Oak Forest	1	Present
Oak Savanna/woodlands	1	Present but degraded
Old Forests (pine, relic hemlock, floodplain forest, oak)	1	Present – older oak
Remnant and planted prairie in historic prairie areas	1	Present
Cool season grass (including hay/pasture)	2	Not present
Forested Wetlands (bottomland hardwoods, floodplain and ash forest)	2	Not present
Hardwoods	2	Present
Agriculture (including food plots)	3	Not Present
Forest Openings (for priority species such as deer and turtles)	3	Not Present
Mixed conifer/deciduous forest	3	Not Present
Shrub Wetland	3	Limited Presence
Upland Shrub	3	Present
Young Forest (primarily aspen)	3	Present

Species-Specific Resources

The planning team may also consider impacts to specific plant and animal species. Game species such as turkey and deer are popular pursuits for hunters that use BMSP. Several species of rare animals are also present, including nine threatened, two species of special concern and 11 on the watchlist. Three species of rare plants are present in the park, with one listed as threatened and two as special concern species (WDNR, 2015a).

Additional species-specific management considerations may be evaluated during the planning process. These may include:

- Considerations for bats, which play important roles in many ecosystems and consume large numbers of pest insects. Blue Mound State Park and the surrounding landscape in Dane and Iowa counties provide valuable foraging, summer roosting and winter hibernation habitat for several bat species.
- Management for bird species associated with grassland shrub habitat types. Existing Surrogate Grasslands are degraded and provide little habitat opportunity for grassland bird habitat. Consideration may be given to allowing these areas to convert to forest or transitional areas of grassland shrub or savanna restoration, which could provide habitat for several priority bird species.
- Blue Mound State Park and the surrounding areas contain large blocks of older, upland forest which provide important habitat for several forest interior birds.
- At least 15 species of terrestrial snail have been documented in the park. Of these, two are rare. These snails can be vulnerable to management activities that alter temperature, moisture and/or their food supplies.



Ecologically Important Sites: Primary Sites

The biotic inventory for Blue Mound State Park identified two Primary Sites. Primary Sites are areas that warrant consideration for protection or restoration management during the planning process. These sites are delineated because they encompass the best examples of rare and representative natural communities, contain documented occurrences of rare species populations and/or have opportunities for ecological restoration or connections.

Pleasure Valley Woods Primary Site contains:

- Moderate to good quality Southern Mesic Forest
- Ryan Creek, which is an Exceptional Resource Water and Class II trout stream

- Several rare species, including forest interior birds, one of which has a population of statewide significance
- Suitable foraging and summer roosting habitat for bats
- Restorable small Dry Prairie-Oak Woodland complex

Blue Mound Woods Primary Site contains:

- Extensive moderate quality Southern Dry-mesic Forest
- Several rare species, including forest interior birds
- Suitable foraging and summer roosting habitat for bats
- Ephemeral water features (ponds, streams) and Forested Seeps.



Regional Characteristics



Regional Ecological Characteristics

In planning future management for Blue Mound State Park, it is important the DNR planning team consider the park in its regional context. This section examines the natural resources and recreational opportunity of the region surrounding Blue Mound State Park.

DNR plans most properties as part of regional master plans. These regions are defined by the 16 Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin. Blue Mound State Park sits within the Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape. DNR has also defined eight recreation planning regions. These regions have been assessed for recreation opportunity as part of two efforts: the Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Blue Mound State Park is within Southern Gateways SCORP Region.

The regional characteristics and considerations described here are primarily sourced from:

- *The ecological landscapes of Wisconsin: An assessment of ecological resources and a guide to planning sustainable management*. Chapter 20 of this document describes the Southwest Savanna in detail (WDNR, 2015b)
- The Recreation Opportunities Analysis for the Southern Gateways Region (WDNR, 2018b)
- The Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WDNR, 2015c)
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (draft, WDNR, 2018a)
- Outside in Wisconsin: Results of the 2016 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Survey (Holsman et al., 2017)

These documents describe the regional and statewide context of Blue Mound State Park in greater detail than their summaries in this document. The planning team may reference these sources in its work.

Ecological Characteristics and Features: The Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape

The Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape is 1,950 square miles in size, comprising 3.5% of the land area of Wisconsin. Blue Mound State Park sits along the northern border of the landscape, with a small portion of the park falling within the Western Coulees and Ridges Ecological Landscape. The Southwest Savanna is among the warmest of the ecological landscapes – with the fourth longest growing season, second warmest January low temperature and third lowest snowfall of the ecological landscapes.

The landscape is part of Wisconsin's Driftless Area – an area defined by its lack of glaciation for at least the last 2.4 million years. Sedimentary bedrock, especially dolomites and sandstones, underlay much of the landscape. Soils are primarily silt loams, which are shallow in some areas with red clay subsoil or bedrock at or near the surfaces. Valleys contain alluvial sands, loams and occasional peats. Owing to its place in the Driftless Area, the Southwest Savanna has a primarily dendritic drainage pattern. Natural lakes are nearly absent, though some reservoirs have been developed.

Most of the landscape (70%) is covered in agricultural crop production. Grassland, forest and residential areas comprise the remainder. The grasslands are primarily pasture, with prairie remnants persisting in areas poorly suited to agriculture. Pastures with scattered open-grown oaks still exist in some areas. These pastures mimic the historical oak savanna structure. Major forest types of the landscape are oak-hickory and maple-basswood (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2015a).



Natural Communities within the Southwest Savanna

The *Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin* (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2015b) lists the natural communities in the Southwest Savanna for which there are management opportunities. These are shown in Table 8, which appears as Appendix 20.F in *The Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin*. Bolded natural communities are present within Blue Mound State Park.

Table 8. Blue Mound State Park Land Cover

Natural Communities for which there are management opportunities in the Southwest Savanna		
Major Opportunity*	Important Opportunity	Present
Oak Opening	Southern Dry Forest	Floodplain Forest
Oak Woodland	Southern Dry-mesic Forest	Cedar Glade
Dry Prairie	Southern Mesic Forest	Shrub-carr
Dry-Mesic Prairie	Hemlock Relict	Sand Prairie
Mesic Prairie	Pine Relict	Wet Prairie
Surrogate Grasslands	Wet-Mesic Prairie	Southern Sedge Meadow
Warmwater Streams	Dry Cliff (Curtis' Exposed Cliff)	Emergent Marsh
	Moist Cliff (Curtis' Shaded Cliff)	Submergent Marsh
	Coldwater Stream	Ephemeral Pond
	Coolwater Stream	Reservoir
		Warmwater River

*Major opportunity – Relatively abundant, represented by multiple significant occurrences, or ecological landscape is appropriate for major restoration activities.

**Important opportunity – Less abundant but represented by one to several significant occurrences or type is restricted to one or a few ecological landscapes.

***Present – Uncommon or rare, with no good occurrences documented. Better opportunities are known to exist in other ecological landscapes, or opportunities have not been adequately evaluated.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need

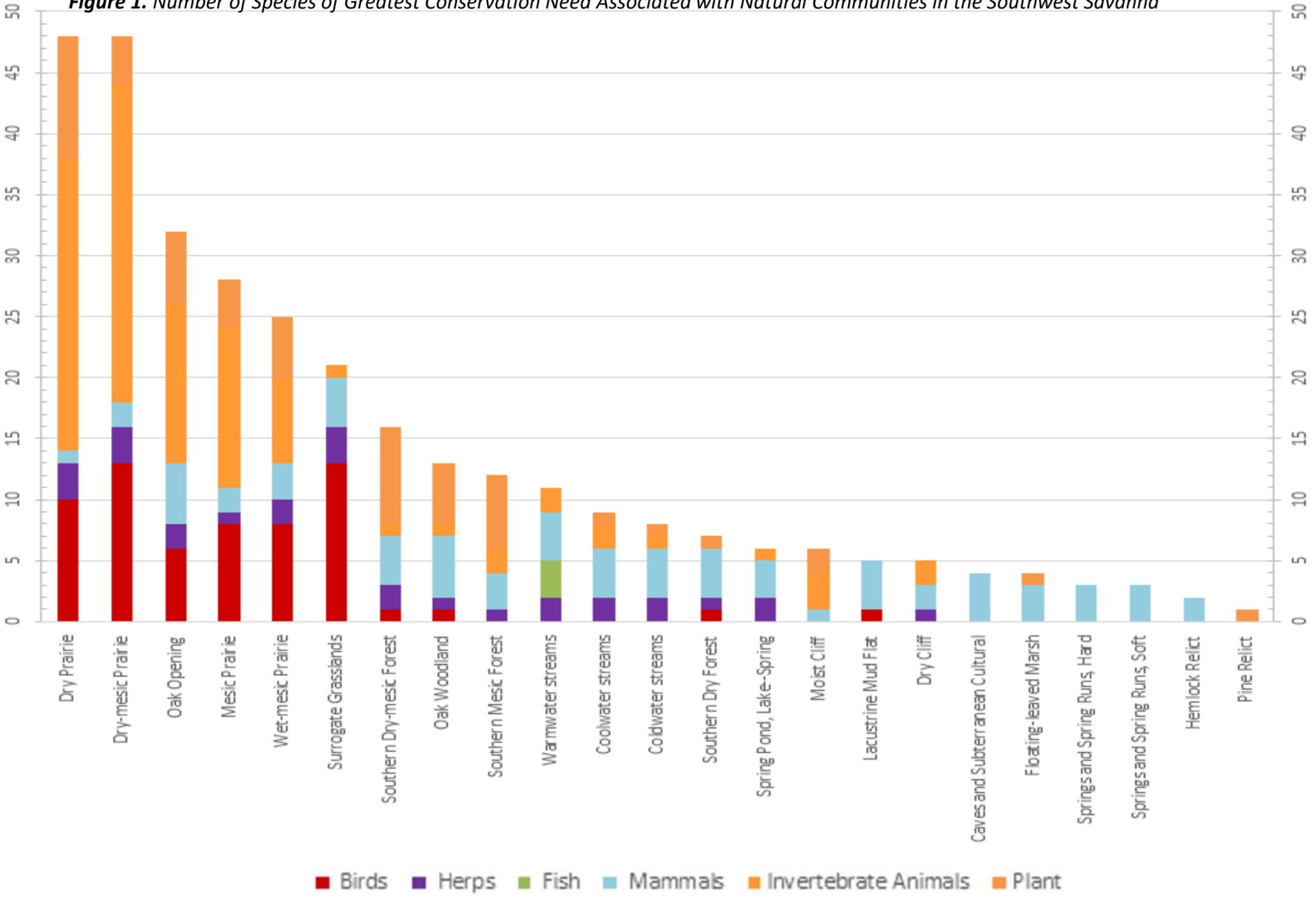
The Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan identifies ecological priorities within each Ecological Landscape. Priorities represent the natural communities in each

Ecological Landscape that are most important to Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). SGCN are native wildlife species with low or declining populations that are most at risk of no longer being a viable part of Wisconsin's fauna. Figure 1 shows the number of SGCN associated with each of the Southwest Savanna's natural communities. For detailed information specific to the Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape and these properties, including lists of species and the habitats with which they are associated, please see the [Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan](#) (WDNR, 2015c) and the appendices in the [Blue Mound State Park Rapid Ecological Assessment](#) (WDNR, 2015a).



An upland sandpiper. This species is a Species of Greatest Conservation Need that occurs in the Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape. Photo by Dawn Scranton.

Figure 1. Number of Species of Greatest Conservation Need Associated with Natural Communities in the Southwest Savanna



Wisconsin Conservation Opportunity Areas Southwest Savanna Ecological Landscape



Blue Mound State Park

LITTLE PLATTE RIVER
AND TRIBUTARIES

SOUTHWEST GRASSLANDS
AND STREAMS

SOUTHWEST GRASSLANDS
AND STREAMS

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

IOWA

HARDSCRABBLE PRAIRIE

ILLINOIS

Aquatic Opportunity Areas

Ecological Significance

-  Global (Great Lakes)
-  Continental
-  Upper Midwest
-  State

Terrestrial Opportunity Areas

Ecological Significance

-  Global
-  Continental
-  Upper Midwest
-  State

-  Ecological Landscape
-  County



Conservation Opportunity Areas

In addition to identifying SGCN, the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2015b) also identifies areas on the landscape containing significant ecological features, natural communities or SGCN habitat for which Wisconsin plays a role in their conservation. The WAP identifies these areas (referred to as Conservation Opportunity Areas or COAs) on a scale of ecological significance, ranging from global to state. [COA's](#) represent some of the best places to implement conservation actions recommended in the WAP (WDNR, 2017). Two terrestrial COA's and one aquatic are within the Southwest Savanna:

- Little Platte River and Tributaries (State Significance)
- Hardscrabble Prairie (State Significance)
- Southwest Grasslands and Streams (Upper-Midwest Significance)

Blue Mound State Park is not within a COA.

Land Legacy Report

The [Wisconsin Land Legacy Report](#) (WDNR, 2006) identified Wisconsin's most important conservation and recreation needs over a 50-year period. The report identified eight places in the Southwest Savanna as Land Legacy Places – those places that merit conservation action based upon a combination of ecological significance and recreational potential. A rank of five indicates outstanding recreation or conservation potential while a rank of one represents limited recreation potential or good to average ecological qualities. With a rating of four for conservation significance and five for recreational significance, Blue Mound State Park plays a valuable role in the region for both.

Table 9. Southwest Savanna Land Legacy Places

Place Name	Size	Protection Initiated	Protection Remaining	Conservation Significance	Recreation Potential
Blue Mound-Blanchardville Prairie and Savanna	Large	Moderate	Substantial	5	5
Blue Mound State Park	Small	Substantial	Limited	4	5
Fever River-Hardscrabble Prairie	Medium	Limited	Substantial	3	2
Grant and Rattlesnake Rivers	Medium	Limited	Moderate	2	2
Monroe-Muralt Prairie	Medium	Limited	Substantial	5	3
Pecatonica River and Grasslands	Large	Limited	Substantial	4	3
Platte River	Medium	Limited	Moderate	2	2
Yellowstone Lake	Small	Substantial	Limited	1	4



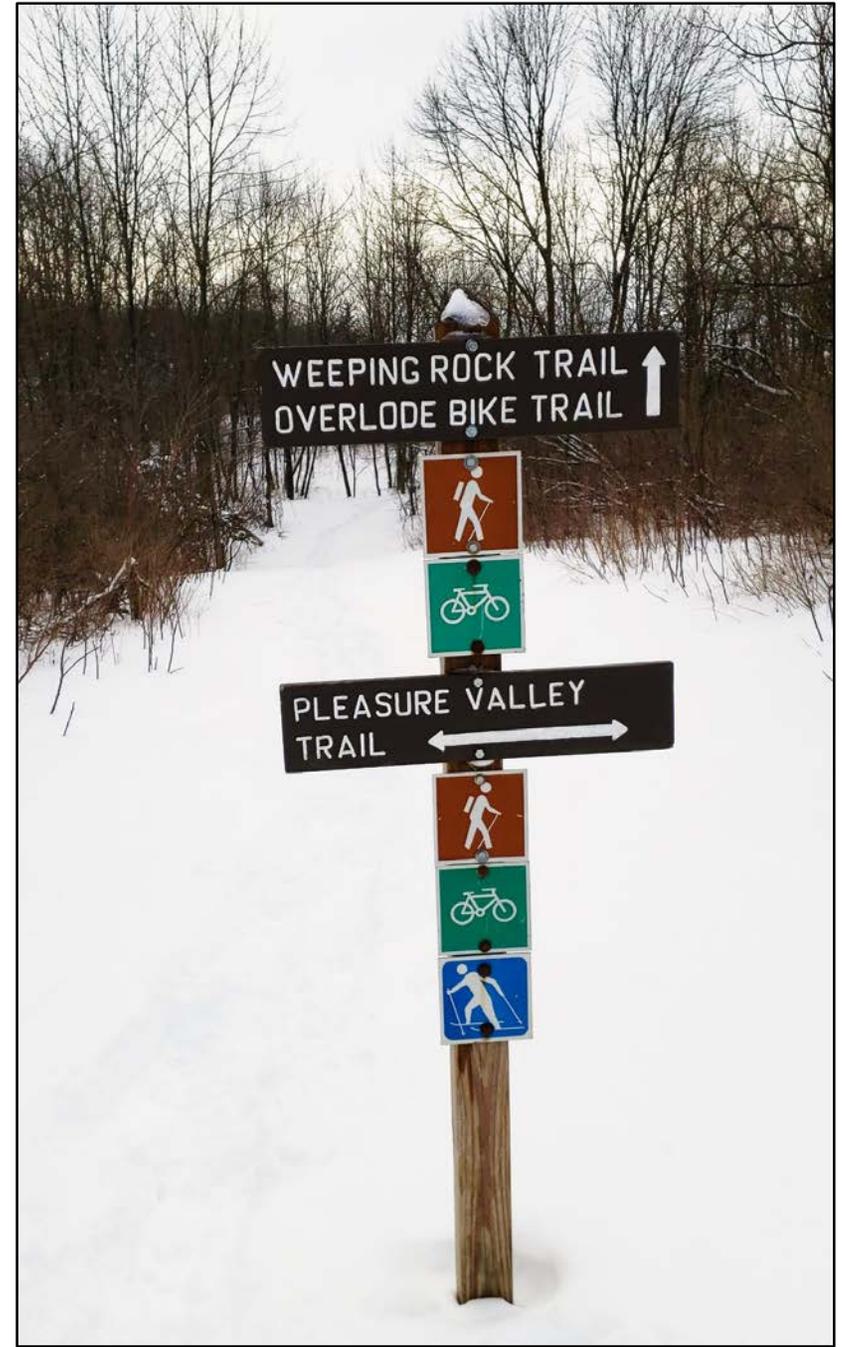
Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters

Outstanding (ORW) and Exceptional (ERW) Resource Waters are officially designated waters (ch. NR 102.11 Wis. Admin. Code) which provide outstanding recreational opportunities, support valuable fish and wildlife habitat, have good water quality, and are not significantly impacted by human activities. These waters are recognized as being the highest quality in the state. ORWs comprise less than 1% of the over 15,000 rivers, lakes, and waterbodies in Wisconsin; they typically do not have any point sources discharging pollutants directly to the water (for instance, no industrial sources or municipal sewage treatment plants) and no increases of pollutant levels are allowed. If a waterbody has existing point sources at the time of designation, it is more likely to be designated as an ERW.

The Southwest Savanna has four ORWs and 21 ERWs. Ryan Creek, in Blue Mound State Park, is an ERW (WDNR,2016).

Trout Streams

Wisconsin's trout streams are categorized into three classifications. Class I trout streams are the highest quality, while Class III are the lowest. The Southwest Savanna contains nine Class I waters, 78 Class II waters, and four Class III waters. Ryan Creek in Blue Mound State Park is a Class II trout water.



Regional Recreation Characteristics

Regional Recreation: Southern Gateways SCORP Region

To understand existing outdoor recreation opportunities and assess future needs, DNR undertook a Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) in 2017 – 2018. Broader efforts, such as the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), have made assessments for the entire state and influenced the ROA effort. However, the ROA took a more localized approach and assessed recreational opportunity in eight regions based on county boundaries.

Blue Mound State Park falls within the Southern Gateways SCORP region. Southern Gateways encompasses Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock and Sauk counties. The region encompasses a more geologically and topographically diverse area than the Southwest Savanna as portions of five ecological landscapes are within the Southern Gateways. The region is undergoing changes as the populations of Dane County and the Madison metro area grow. This growth, and the Madison area in general, exerts great influence on the Southern Gateways region. Even still, over 50% of the region's land cover is agricultural.

Recreational Activities

Recreational activity participation rates and preferences for the Southern Gateways region was collected during both SCORP and ROA processes. During the SCORP process a survey of recreational participation was sent throughout Wisconsin. The results of this statistically valid survey were presented in *Outdoor in Wisconsin: Results of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (Holsman, 2017). The ROA utilized an online public input form and hard copy input forms were available at public meetings held during the process. The ROA public input results are not considered a statistically valid sample of each region's residents. Rather, the results represent the opinions of those interested in giving their input during the ROA process.

Based on ROA input form response, the following recreation activities are the most popular within the Southern Gateways region:

- ATV/UTV riding
- Single track mountain biking
- **Surfaced trail bicycling**
- Tent camping
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat or from shore
- **Hiking, walking or running on trails**
- Big game hunting
- **Swimming**
- Snowmobiling

Popular ROA activities that are bolded were also indicated as popular activities in the randomized survey of Southern Gateways residents from the SCORP process. Other popular nature-based activities based on the SCORP survey include:

- Picnicking/tailgating/cookouts
- Bird/wildlife watching at or away from home
- Motor boating
- Visiting a nature center

Recreational Opportunities

Opportunity for outdoor recreation is often, but not entirely, on public lands. The Southern Gateways Region contains more state parks than any other region in Wisconsin. However, compared to other regions there is less public land overall. Thus, public properties in the region receive heavy use.

These public lands are a mix of federal, state, county and local ownership. These properties range from wildlife refuges and small boat launches to state parks with many developed recreational opportunities and state trails.



Notable public lands sharing the Southern Gateways Region with Blue Mound State Park and offering outdoor recreational opportunities include:

- Governor Dodge State Park
 - Extensive recreation opportunities are available including hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, wildlife observation, nature photography, boating and paddle sports, fishing, hunting and camping.
- Ice Age Trail
 - Extensive hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing and bird watching opportunities are present along this meandering trail that runs over 1,000 miles across Wisconsin.
- Devil's Lake State Park
 - Wisconsin's most popular park, Devil's Lake recreational offerings include swimming and beach access, hiking, off-road bicycling, rock climbing, camping, playground and picnic areas, hunting, fishing boating, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.
- Yellowstone Lake State Park and Yellowstone Wildlife Area
 - The park is adjacent to a large wildlife area. Together, they offer hiking, equestrian, off-road bicycling snowmobile and cross-country ski trails; along with wildlife viewing, photography, hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

Some private lands in the region, such as those enrolled in managed forest law or forest crop law programs, owned by land trusts, or part of the voluntary public access program are also open to outdoor recreation. Opportunities on these lands vary, and are generally limited to hiking, hunting, fishing or trapping.

Future Recreation Needs

The recreation needs of the Southern Gateways region are shown in Table 10. These needs are categorized as high, medium, or low and are based on public input provided during both the SCORP and ROA processes, assessments of existing recreational opportunities, and department staff expertise.

Table 10. Future Recreation Needs in the Southern Gateways Region

Recreation Need Level		
High	Medium	Low
ATV/UTV riding	Bicycling – fat tire/snow biking	Dog sledding/skijoring
Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding	Cross country skiing	Dog training
Bicycling – mountain biking/off-road biking	Dog walking	Dog trialing
Bird or wildlife watching	Fishing – ice fishing	Horse cart driving
Camping – developed	Fishing – lake fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak	Hunting – migratory birds
Camping – primitive	Fishing – river fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak	Hunting – small game
Canoeing or kayaking	Fishing – stream/river fishing from shore or wading	Sailing, windsurfing, rowing, stand-up paddling
Fishing – lake fishing from shore or a pier	Four-wheel vehicle driving	Scuba diving/snorkeling
Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	Geocaching	Trapping
Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking	Horseback riding	Whitewater rafting
Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)	Hunting – big game	
Picnicking	Hunting – turkey	
Snowshoeing	Nature photography	
Swimming in lakes and rivers	Off-highway motorcycle riding	
	Participating in nature-based education programs	
	Rock climbing	
	Snowmobiling	
	Target shooting – archery	
	Target shooting – firearms	
	Visiting a beach, beach walking	



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Photos by Katie Godding, Kevin Swenson and Savannah Erzen, Wisconsin DNR.



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