



Introduction

Every five years, Wisconsin publishes a *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* to serve as a blueprint for state and local outdoor recreation planning as required by the *Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965*. For the 2011–2016 Wisconsin SCORP, the State not only met the requirements of the LWCF Act but also reflected on the *America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative*, launched in 2010 by President Obama, for an approach that asks the American people to become partners in preserving and enhancing their conservation and recreation heritage for the 21st-century. This SCORP is presented out of the respect to the state’s great outdoor recreation resources and their value to the people of Wisconsin.



Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP was prepared in accordance with the Federal LWCF Act for the eligibility of LWCF acquisition and development assistance, administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as authorized by the Governor. The LWCF Program is a vital source of voluntary grants for state and local outdoor recreation projects. In order to distribute dollars equitably among local communities, a project rating system, the Open Project Selection Process, has been developed to consider a variety of pertinent factors. Each application is rated based on this system and the highest-ranking submissions are awarded LWCF funding. This SCORP continues to meet LWCF eligibility with the following components:

- Description of the process and methodology(s) chosen to meet LWCF guidelines
- Generous public participation in the planning process
- Comprehensive identification of outdoor recreation issues
- Comprehensive evaluation of outdoor recreation supply and demand
- Implementation program with strategies, priorities, and actions to serve as detailed project selection criteria for LWCF funding
- Wetlands priority component

Fifteen combined federal and state outdoor recreation funding programs require projects applying for funds to use the SCORP's implementation program (see Appendix A for a complete list of programs).

America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative

The AGO Initiative is established in recognition of the importance of conservation to the American people, and it calls for greater federal support to grassroots conservation efforts through financial and technical assistance. Direction for the AGO Initiative was taken from the American people through 51 public listening sessions held across the country as well as 105,000 submitted comments. The consensus was clear: America's outdoor spaces are essential to our quality of life, economy, and national identity. Nature reduces stress and anxiety,

promotes learning and personal growth, and fosters mental and physical health.

Through this public engagement, three major visions emerged. The first vision promotes a reconnection and enhancement of relationships between the American people and vast outdoor recreation opportunities. The second AGO vision seeks to ensure availability of quality outdoor recreation to the American public through open space conservation and restoration, especially by funding the Land and Water Conservation Act. Finally, the AGO vows to become a more effective conservation partner by fostering cooperation and collaboration between federal, state, and local governments, and AGO partnerships.

To meet such challenges, a new vision for conservation in the 21st-century is needed. The American people and federal, state, local, and tribal governments must collectively work together to preserve and promote America's great outdoors and its benefits. The AGO Report, released February 2011, outlines goals and actions to be accomplished by such partnerships. For the 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP, Wisconsin charges forward with dynamic recreation planning that keeps in mind the actions of the AGO Report.

Description of Plan

A recommendation from the AGO report (Action item 5.3) calls for developing new guidelines and criteria for SCORPS that focus a portion of LWCF funding on urban parks and community green spaces, landscape-scale conservation and recreational blueways, in addition to outdoor recreation. Figure 1-1 illustrates how multiple approaches of the 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP align with these visions and recommendations.

Public Participation Process

Public participation has been an extensive component of this planning process. An External Review Panel comprised of nine members participated in several phases of the planning process. Members, representing a broad range of recreational providers and experts, contributed their expertise to initiatives such as identifying and prioritizing significant statewide outdoor recreation issues and determining possible solutions. In addition to this, seven focus groups were held across the State that represented a broad spectrum of recreation and conservation interests.

Figure 1-1: Outline of Wisconsin SCORP Alignment with AGO Visions



Discussions were also held the Governor's Bicycle and State Trails Council's on recreation issues.

The draft plan underwent a 30-day public review period in which 32 written responses were received. All responses were in support of the plan with the largest amount of comments associated with the lack of a specific recreation resource such as equestrian trails or water trail campsites. Other comments included the support of pub-

lic/private partnerships, a more refined state focus upon popular recreation activities such as camping and biking and the need for better targeting of local park and recreation needs. The sum of these many and varied responses begins to indicate the complexity and challenge of providing high quality outdoor recreation or the numerous user groups who rely on Wisconsin lands and waters.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In detail, this plan consists of six chapters and seven appendices, which are summarized below.



Chapter 2 analyzes the demand for outdoor recreation activities by popularity and by setting. Further, this chapter reviews the effect of migration and urban population growth on outdoor recreation and its access.



Chapter 3 looks at the inclusion of health and wellness in outdoor recreation planning. The effect of outdoor recreation access on health determinants is examined, as are the participation rates in outdoor recreation activities that yield the greatest health benefits. The push to consider public health in planning is relatively new to SCORPs, and the 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP sets itself apart with this challenging chapter.



Chapter 4 explores the current offerings of urban recreation across municipalities in Wisconsin when compared to similar peers. Focus groups discussed barriers to urban recreation and identified potential solutions to meet modern needs in urban recreation by addressing such factors as demographics, safety, and aesthetics.



Chapter 5 examines the public and private holders of recreation land throughout Wisconsin and the programs that encourage conservation and acquisition of public land and protection and public access of private land. Extensive findings from focus groups of stakeholders are presented, including successes, challenges, and big ideas for open land conservation.



Chapter 6 describes seven goals, each with a list of actions, designed to encourage the connection of Wisconsin's residents to the great outdoors within their state. The goals and actions presented in this chapter were developed with the input of DNR groups, the SCORP External Review Panel, and the citizens of Wisconsin.
