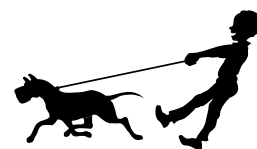




**Dane
County
Parks**
Always in Season

PRAIRIE MORaine PARK
Approved Master Plan Report
August 2002



Resolution No. ____2002-03

Approving the Master Plan for Prairie Moraine Park

In 1993 the Dane County Board passed Resolution No. 146, 1993-94; that transferred land from Badger Prairie Hospital and Home to the Dane County Park Commission. The park offers an outstanding example of a glacial feature known as a terminal moraine, provides a segment of the Ice Age Trail corridor, and has an off leash pet exercise area. Use of the park as a pet exercise area has far surpassed the parks department expectations; as a result, Dane County Parks initiated a master planning process in 2000 to attempt to resolve issues that have arose as public use of the park increased.

The plan has now been completed and the Dane County Parks Commission request the approval of the Master Plan for Prairie Moraine Park. This Master Plan will assist in providing future direction for acquisition, development and operation for one of Dane County's busiest parks.

An extensive public outreach program was conducted which included four public meetings and many additional interviews and meetings with stakeholders, park staff, area landowners, volunteers and special interest groups.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, That the Dane County Board of Supervisors adopts the Master Plan for Prairie Moraine Park as a guide for future acquisition, development and operation.

Be It Further Resolved, That the County Board of Supervisors thanks the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, National Park Service, Advocates for Prairie Moraine, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey and all of the citizens and local officials for their time and effort in commenting and formulating the project plan.

Submitted By _____

Approved by the Park Commission 8/28/02 (6/0)

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Executive Summary

The concept for creating Prairie Moraine Park began when the Ice Age Trail Corridor was developed. Prairie Moraine Park is now one of the County's most used park facilities. The extreme amount of use as an off leash dog exercise area has resulted in the completion of this Master Plan. The plan is an effort to address environmental and user group issues and concerns.

The concept of the design process has been to provide recreational opportunities for all park users without generating negative impacts to the site. The program to complete this plan has entailed more than two years of meeting with the public, neighboring property owners, special interest groups, and park users.

Project objectives were formulated based on input provided and information gathered throughout the planning process. They are in no particular order of importance.

Objective One

Create additional off leash areas in the park and within the local region to lessen negative impacts to the park.

Objective Two

Protect significant natural and geologic resources within the park, including protection of desirable open viewsheds.

Objective Three

Provide sufficient designated parking areas for park users that does not exceed capacity limits.

Objective Four

Continually monitor and maintain positive relationships with neighboring property owners.

Objective Five

Create a park environment that allows co-existence of off leash pet exercise areas, Ice Age Trail corridor, and vegetative restoration efforts.

A comprehensive site inventory of the location, historic, natural, geologic, hydrologic, vegetative, and viewshed components of the site was completed. Recommended park improvements based on public input, site inventory research, and park staff experience including parking lot, interior park fencing, trails, site amenities, and plans for the 911 tower site are discussed. Following is a management plan that considers trails, vegetation, signage, the 911 tower, and volunteer group possibilities.

Acquisition projects are discussed that would expand dog exercise areas to the south of the existing park boundary; and facilitate future Ice Age Trail development north and east of the park. The County only purchases land from willing sellers.

The overall conclusion of this report finds that the intense use of this site requires implementation of the plan as soon as possible to avoid negative environmental impacts to the park.

I. Introduction

The concept for creating Prairie Moraine Park began when the Ice Age Trail Corridor was developed. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail (NST) is one of eight National Scenic Trails in the United States, and its purpose is to highlight and preserve Wisconsin's glacial history. The Ice Age Trail was authorized as a National Scenic Trail in 1980. It is part of a very select family of trails of which there are only seven other Scenic Trails in the National Trails System, including the Appalachian Trail and Pacific Crest Trail. The trail originated in 1958 when the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, state and local units of government, and others began to work toward creating a 1,200 mile footpath that follows the last great glacial advance left some 15,000 years ago. When completed the trail will connect 31 of Wisconsin's 72 counties and wind through some of the world's finest examples of glacial features such as ice walled lake plains, drumlins, eskers, kames, kettle ponds, tunnel channels, and moraines. Today approximately half the trail is open to use.

Recognizing the significance of the Ice Age NST, the State of Wisconsin designated it a State Scenic Trail in 1987. Dane County also incorporated the Ice Age NST as a principal element of the Park and Open Space Plan in 1987 and reaffirmed its commitment to the trail in the 2001-2005 Park and Open Space Plan update.

The location of the Ice Age NST corridor in Dane County was identified in the late 1980's and approved by the Wisconsin DNR in 1992. One of the primary objectives of the trail is to follow the terminal moraine left by the last glacial advance. This is the same moraine that traverses through Prairie Moraine Park, and it is one of the trail's highlights.

Prairie Moraine Park has become one of the busiest parks in the Dane County Park system. Currently; primary use of the park is an off-leash dog exercise area. In 1997, Dane County Parks prepared a planning report for the park to investigate how the Ice Age Trail (IAT) corridor, significant natural resources, and recreational opportunities would co-exist within the park boundary.

Since the initial report, use of the park as a pet exercise area has far exceeded the parks department expectations. As Prairie Moraine Park was being developed, very few dog exercise areas existed in the United States; therefore, Dane County Parks planning and development efforts could almost have been considered experimental. Evidence of negative environmental impacts, questions regarding how much of the site should be designated as off-leash, and lack of parking have been some of the concerns that have materialized from the high volume of park use. In response, Dane County Parks initiated a more involved master planning effort in 2000 to attempt to resolve issues that have arose as public use of the park increased.

II. Concept

The intent of this planning process has been to accommodate both IAT and pet exercise user needs while preserving and protecting geologic and natural resources within the park. This same concept would apply to additional lands acquired for park expansion adjacent to the park.

III. Program

Neighbors, dog owners, IAT representatives, and the general public have been active in the planning process throughout; and have provided feedback to assist with the development of the plan. Along with periodic face to face meetings, and phone conversations with interested parties since the initial report was completed; meetings have been held starting in June of 2000 with representatives from Advocates for Dogs at Prairie Moraine, and again in August of 2000 with IAT representatives.

Dane County Parks has had numerous contacts with the Wesner family to discuss issues related to being an adjacent property owner to the park. A meeting was held in 2001 with the Wesner's and other adjoining neighbors to answer questions and listen to concerns. Two informational meetings on the vegetation and glacial history of the site resulted as a follow up to the meetings with the neighbors. At a meeting held in September of 2001, Lee Clayton, a geologist with the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, and co-author of "Pleistocene Geology of Dane County, Wisconsin" spoke on the geology of Prairie Moraine Park. In February of 2001, there was another public meeting held and a decision was made to tour the park with any interested parties to discuss trail and other planning issues. A site tour with IAT representatives and dog advocates was conducted in March of 2001.

In January of 2002, a public informational meeting was held to present the draft Master Plan and explain recommended improvements. A meeting summary is presented under Appendix 1. It was evident that there were additional comments/input that were not heard at this meeting due to time constraints; therefore, two additional public informational meetings were held in February, including one on site. Meeting summaries are presented under Appendix 2 and 3.

The program for the Master Plan was developed through the above mentioned meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to develop a better understanding of the needs of the different user groups and of the natural and geologic resources of the site. A list of criteria considered to be very important to development of the Master Plan was generated from the public meetings and is presented under appendix 4.

IV. Project Objectives

During the previously outlined public participation process; a general list of short and long term goals was developed prior to writing the draft Master Plan report. (Appendix 5) Based on the most recent public information meetings and input, site observations, and discussion by parks staff; a list of project objectives was formulated as follows. They are listed in no particular order of importance.

Objective One

Create additional off leash areas in the park and within the local region to lessen negative impacts to the park.

Objective Two

Protect significant natural and geologic resources within the park, including protection of desirable open viewsheds.

Objective Three

Provide sufficient designated parking areas for park users that does not exceed capacity limits.

Objective Four

Continually monitor and maintain positive relationships with neighboring property owners.

Objective Five

Create a park environment that allows co-existence of off leash pet exercise areas, Ice Age Trail corridor, and vegetative restoration efforts.

V. Site Inventory

LOCATION

Prairie Moraine Park is located in the Town of Verona, on CTH PB; about 1.5 miles south of the STH 18-151/CTH PB interchange. The park's proximity to the growing southwest corner of the Madison metro area has made this an extremely popular destination for people seeking off-leash pet exercise areas.

HISTORY

The exact history of this park is uncertain; however, from County records and interviews with local townspeople, the following is known to have occurred.

A leper colony consisting of a house, building, and woodshed existed on the site during the late 1800's to early 1900's. Leprosy was a disease that was caused by infectious bacteria and resulted in massive destruction of skin tissue. People who had (or were suspected to have) the disease were banished to "leper colonies". During this time period the property was owned by Dane County Hospital and Home. The area was used as a leper colony until the late 1920's or early 30's.

From the 30's to the 70's the land was relatively unused except for farming and livestock grazing purposes. In 1970 a 911 communication tower was established on the east side of the site. The tower is still being used and the facility may be expanded in the future if conditions warrant.

In 1993, the land was transferred by resolution (Appendix 6) from the hospital to Dane County Parks "for park and open space purposes, as a corridor for the IAT, and to relocate the Dane County Conservation League's conservation programs to the site."

In 1995, the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF) and Dane County Parks co-wrote a grant to develop the IAT corridor through the park. The 1997 Master Plan was the result of that grant. One of the original objectives of this Master Plan was to provide an off leash pet exercise area. Use of the park for this purpose rapidly increased, and an Advocates for Dogs at Prairie Moraine was formed in the Fall of 2000. The first newsletter from the group is presented under Appendix 7.

NATURAL FEATURES

The site inventory for geology, hydrology and drainage, soils, and vegetation that was completed under the 1997 Master Plan is still pertinent for this report; and therefore will be reused for this planning effort.

Geology

The following section on Geology was provided by Lee Clayton, Geologist, from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey.

During the Ice Age, the great North American ice sheet grew and then melted away dozens of times, reaching as far west as the Rockies, as far north as the Arctic Ocean, east to the Atlantic, and south to the Ohio and Missouri Rivers. Each glaciation lasted several tens of thousands years, and each of the intervening warm periods lasted several thousand years. The last of these glacial events was the Wisconsin Glaciation, which culminated about 20,000 years ago. The ice had melted back out of the state by about 11,000 years ago and finally disappeared from central Canada about 5,000 years ago.

The southern-most extent of the ice sheet is here marked by the Prairie Moraine. In Dane County, the moraine extends from the Wisconsin River near Prairie du Sac, through Cross Plains, to Brooklyn.

To the south of the moraine the valley sides are made of sandstone of the St. Peter Formation, and the flatter hilltops are capped with limestone of the Platteville Formation, all overlain by a few feet of soil. This is part of the Driftless Area, which apparently was never glaciated. To the north of the moraine, the valleys were clogged and the sandstone and limestone were buried under many feet of glacial debris-clay, silt, sand, and gravel carried here by the glacier.

Prairie Moraine Park could be the best place in the Midwest to view a moraine. A moraine is a ridge of glacial debris that accumulates at the edge of a glacier when the glacier has stabilized.

Its edge remains in one position because it is melting back as fast as the ice is moving forward, allowing debris to melt out of the ice and accumulate as a ridge. The moraine here is 30-50' high and 300' wide. It is steepest on the north side where it was banked up against the glacier, and it is less steep on its south side where mud and other debris flowed and tumbled down off the glacier. Boulders are conspicuous on the south flank of the moraine but are absent on the base of the moraine southward through the Driftless Area to the Mississippi. Boulders of far traveled rock are abundant from the moraine northward. Some rock types can be traced back to their source around Hudson Bay.

The area around the parking lot at Prairie Moraine Park slopes gently up to the moraine and is underlain by sand and gravel washed out of the glacier by small melt water streams. Outcrops of St. Peter sandstone can be seen farther east between the moraine and the south park boundary. Low lying billowy mounds of glacial debris occur between the moraine and the north park boundary. The moraine is breached by a gorge half way between the tower and the parking lot; it was eroded by water from a glacial lake that suddenly drained north of the park.

Soils

The following is a list of soils that are found within the park boundary according to the "Soil Survey of Dane County, Wisconsin", authored by the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service.

Mapping Symbol	Soil Name	Slope	Characteristic
BaB2	Basco Silt Loam	2-6%	Eroded
BaC2	Basco Silt Loam	6-12%	Eroded
DnB	Dodge Silt Loam	2-6%	
DnC2	Dodge Silt Loam	6-12%	Eroded
DoC2	Dodge and Kidder Soils	6-12%	Eroded
DuC2	Dunbarton Silt Loam	6-12%	Eroded
EmC2	Elkmound Sandy Loam	6-12%	Eroded
EmD2	Elkmound Sandy Loam	12-20%	Eroded
KrE2	Kidder Soils	20-35%	Eroded
NeB2	New Glarus Silt Loam	2-6%	Eroded
NeC2	New Glarus Silt Loam	6-12%	Eroded
ScB	St. Charles Silt Loam	2-6%	
ScC2	St. Charles Silt Loam	6-12%	Eroded
SmB	Seaton Silt Loam	2-6%	

Overall soils on this site are relatively shallow and have varying water capacities. They rate as mostly having moderate limitations for building trails, however, the steeper slopes such as on the moraine hillside have a severe rating. In fact, all recreational uses are classified as having severe limitations on the moraine. Extreme care should be taken for any facility development that occurs in this area of the park.

Hydrology and Drainage

The terminal moraine traverses east-west; therefore water on the site drains north and south off the slopes. On the north it flows to the center of the moraine and then drains north off the site. On the south side, water flows southwest and southeast off the site.

Vegetation

Analysis of 1835 survey records and research done by John Curtis indicate this area was originally an oak savanna, or oak opening. Oak savannas are dominated by grasses and unevenly dispersed oak trees. Accounts from settlers describe the original savannas. One account states, "The burr oak openings, however, are among the most productive portions of the State, being beautifully adapted to the varied and picturesque surface of the country. Grouped here and there, like so many old orchards, on the summit of a gentle swell of land, or on the border of a marsh, prairie or lake, there is nothing in the whole catalogue of American sylvia that equals these Burr Oaks for the charming, homestead-like expressions they give to the landscape." Common species are the Burr Oak and White Oak, although Black Oak is also found in savannas, usually on sandier soils.

Oak savannas are the result of frequent fires that raged across the prairies. These fires rejuvenated the grasses and killed competing tree species. Only the oaks with their thick cork bark could survive. Settlement of Wisconsin resulted in the cessation of fires.

With the cessation, early succession species invaded the savannas. These species grew quickly without fire to control them and within a few decades wide open savannas were replaced with dense woods. This makes the existence of oak savanna at Prairie Moraine Park all the more important. The openness of the savanna also has another benefit at the park; it allows the shape and form of the moraine to easily be viewed.

On June 27, 1996, an inventory of the pasture species was done on site. A qualitative survey method was used to inventory approximately 65% of the dry prairie and exotic pasture species. A listing of the species inventoried is found under Appendix 8.

Viewsheds

Views of and from the terminal moraine are an outstanding attribute of the site. From the south, wide open views of the expansive moraine hillside are excellent. From atop the moraine, some of the views reach as far as twenty miles.

VI. Recommended Improvements

The overall goal of recommended improvements for the park is to improve the experience of users while protecting and preserving its resources. The improvements outlined below are the result of public input, site inventory research, and park staff experience. A graphic Master Plan of proposed improvements is presented under Appendix 9.

PARKING

A gravel parking lot currently exists in the southwest corner of the park. During weekends and favorable weather, this lot continually overflows onto Wesner Road. Because it is easier to park on the road than in the congested parking lot, more users continue to park on the road even as spots open up in the lot. The property owner at the end of the Wesner Road has had several negative experiences from park users using his driveway as a turn around.

In an attempt to better understand the amount of parking to provide for, Dane County Parks staff counted vehicles on weekends during sunny, mild weather in February and March of 2002. Cars were counted on four separate days at mid morning hours; 34 were the least amount of cars noted, and 52 were the highest. There were between 4 and 8 cars parked on road each time. There have been reports of as many as 90+ cars parked to use the dog exercise area during the summer months. This amount of cars greatly exceeds what can safely be parked there now. Congestion at the Wesner/PB intersection, dog safety outside the parking area, and the ability of emergency vehicles to access the area are all safety issues that illustrate a need to provide a more orderly parking scenario.

There appears to be consensus that the current amount of use should not be exceeded and there should not be additional spaces provided to increase user numbers. The question of what an acceptable capacity limit for the park has arose at several public meetings. Based on park user feedback and site observations, 50-60 cars would appear to be an acceptable capacity limit. Dane County Parks would continue to monitor user impacts to the park under the new parking capacity limits.

The proposed parking lot layout (Appendix 10) has 57 parking spaces and 3 accessible parking stalls. The lot will have 2 entry/egress points to lessen congestion. If funding is available, it is intended to pave and stripe the parking lot to insure orderly parking and allow a maximum capacity to be regulated. Initially, on street parking on Wesner Road would not be allowed and when the lot was full, park users would be required to return at another time.

If demand continues to exceed parking stalls provided, Dane County Parks would consider working with the Town of Verona to investigate the construction of a cul-de-sac and creation of approximately 8 angled parking stalls on the north side of Wesner Road. This measure would only be taken after further analysis as to whether the park could accommodate the additional use without negative impacts.

Other improvements proposed for the parking lot area include a 4-6' decorative board screening fence, a woven wire perimeter fence to keep dogs off roads, two double gated entrances into the park staging area, message boards, and additional waste containers. It is also proposed the Ice Age Trail will have a separate entry point in the northwest corner of the parking lot. There would be two vehicle access gates into the park to allow maintenance of the park, such as hauling wood chips for mulching trails.

Future parking considerations may include creation of a separate Ice Age Trail parking area north of the park. If lands are acquired south of the park, an additional parking lot for dog exercise users would be considered to spread use out over more of the site and reduce wear and tear at the park entry points. Or, a second parking lot east of the gate on Wesner Road may be another alternative to reduce congestion at the park. Buffering issues and maintaining positive neighbor relations may necessitate this option be considered at a future time as conditions permit.

INTERIOR PARK FENCING

The issue of fencing within the park has generated more discussion than any other proposed improvement. The concept of a low fence as a physical barrier between the IAT and pet exercise area was also recommended in the 1997 Master Plan. Overall, there is not strong support for the installation of a fence that would separate on and off leash use of the park. The two primary reasons for opposition of the fence are:

1. Potential negative aesthetic impacts to the openness of the park.
2. There is sentiment that the fence is reducing the amount of useable off leash area.

There are two major issues that necessitate the need for the designation of on and off leash areas. First, Ice Age Trail users are entitled to use the trail corridor without encountering off leash dogs. Second, the steep slope of the moraine and erosive soils make this an unsuitable area for off leash pet exercise use.

The area available for off leash use would change little if at all with the installation of a fence. The fence would generally follow the same line as the existing blue boundary signs that are currently in place.

Dane County Parks will continue to monitor compliance of off leash rules in the park. **Construction of the fence would only take place if there is continuing evidence and complaints of off leash dogs outside the designated boundary.**

At a minimum, a fence may be constructed off the north parking lot decorative fence to separate the proposed IAT trailhead from the pet exercise staging area immediately inside the double gate entries. Interior park fencing is intended to be 42-48" in height and be of the least visually obtrusive materials possible.

TRAILS

The off leash pet exercise trails would remain relatively unchanged. The only exception may involve moving the existing trail that travels through the oak savanna on the moraine to the south to avoid soil compaction and erosion over the root zones. The proposed trail system is shown on the graphic Master Plan.

The exact IAT alignment has yet to be determined. The trail's final alignment should be done in the field based on a coordinated effort between the Dane County Parks and Ice Age National Scenic Trail representatives. Also, Dane County Parks should consider requesting input from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey to identify important, interpretable features, both on and off the site that the trail should highlight. There is a proposed overlook platform on top of the moraine, however details for the structure have not been finalized. Minimal visual impact is the greatest concern. Ice Age Trail tread widths are typically 24" wide and additional 12" clearing width on each side. Trail design must also be sensitive to the areas of native pasque flowers found on top of the moraine. The National Park Service, WDNR, and IAPTF have authored "A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance" that explains facility design standards.

It should be noted that pet owners are entitled to use the IAT corridor provided their pets are on leash. If a fence is constructed, gates will be provided to allow dog owners access to the trails.

SITE AMENITIES

Throughout the planning process, there has been consensus between neighbors, pet owners, and IAT users to keep site development to a minimum. Other than the scenic overlook and amenities proposed around the parking lot, there will be no other proposed structural improvements at this time. Existing benches and picnic tables will remain. There may be the possibility of additional interpretive signage describing geology, land use history, and vegetation of the site.

Provision of water is a frequently requested site amenity. Due to the potential of transfer of disease by shared water areas; Dane County Parks will not provide water. Dog owners are encouraged to bring their own water on hot days or use one of the other dog exercise areas that has water access. (Yahara, Viking, Token Creek)

There has been some discussion of the addition of "dog playground" structures at the park. Because of the desired openness of the site and unique natural landscape; it is not recommended at this time to install "dog playground" structures; however they may be appropriate at another dog exercise location.

911 TOWER

Dane County Public Safety and Communications (DC PSC) was contacted in March to find out if there are any plans to change the tower facility. At this time, there are no expansion plans for the existing building or immediate plans to replace the tower with a taller one. It should be noted DC PSC does retain the right to expand or modify their facility as necessary.

VII. Management Plan

Management of Prairie Moraine Park is divided into three parts: trails, vegetation, and signage.

TRAILS

As with other segments within the County, the Ice Age National Scenic Trail would be managed through coordinated volunteer efforts and Dane County Parks.

Initially, most of the off leash pet exercise trails were mown grass. As use increased, many of the trails have shown tremendous wear and tear; and conversion to wood chips on all of the heavily traveled trails is occurring. Trails experiencing extreme use may require crushed limestone surfacing, however this is a costly, less flexible solution. It may be necessary to close the park during extremely wet periods and in the spring when the frost leaves the ground to prevent excessive soil compaction.

Trails should be a minimum of 6' in width to accommodate mowers and should avoid tree drip-line zones. Heavy traffic around larger trees; especially oaks, compacts the surface root zone and may eventually result in death of the tree. Trail development on steep slopes should "switchback" parallel to slopes whenever possible to avoid erosive gullies that are created by trails perpendicular to the slope. There has been some evidence of this occurring at various volunteer trails throughout the park.

VEGETATION

Vegetation management is divided into two categories; restoration and exotic species control. Three restorations are necessary on this site; the dry prairie, oak woods, and oak savanna. The area of savanna on the moraine, particularly the south slope, has been the primary focus of previous restoration efforts.

Oak savannas retain their open characteristics through frequent grass fires; therefore, burns are an important first step in savanna restoration. Fires burn dead grass which releases nutrients to the soil, opens the ground layer so sunlight can penetrate to warm the soil, and prepare soil for the early growth of savanna species. Fires also help control exotic species because they are less adapted to frequent fires, increasing native species ability to compete with exotics.

Prairie Moraine Park has been burned under the direction of the Dane County Parks Naturalist and a group of volunteers. Future burning and restoration efforts will continue at the park under the direction of the Naturalist as funding and availability of volunteer labor allows. More information regarding prairie burning can be found in "How to Manage Small Prairie Fires" authored by Wayne Pauly, Dane County Parks Naturalist.

Increased openness of the savanna is intended to stimulate the reserve seed bank in the soil and start production of dormant savanna species. Re-introduction of desired species may begin as the savanna's health increases. Final determination of plant species and planting type will be done by Dane County Parks staff along with volunteers.

Restoration of the oak woods is another important restoration effort. Clearing of the understory exotic species (buckthorn, honeysuckle) to increase light availability to the forest floor will stimulate native herbaceous ground layer growth. Dane County Parks Naturalist will monitor and provide guidance for restoration of the oak woods.

Restoration of the dry prairie can be done after exotic species are controlled to prevent them from spreading into the restored areas. Seven of the most prevalent species needing control are as follows: Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), thistles (*Carduus* spp.), Smooth Sumac (*Rhus glabra*), Blue Grass (*Poa* spp.), and Sweet Clover (*Melilotus* spp)

Exotic plants out compete native species and typically form dense, monotypic plant communities that offer low wildlife habitat value. The establishment of dense colonies of Multiflora Rose is not compatible with an off leash dog exercise area. Wild parsnip causes a blister effect if juice from the plant contacts the skin and is exposed to sunlight. Larger plants or dense communities may require cutting and application of Round-Up to the stump to eradicate them. Burning controls many of the exotic species listed above. Recommendations for control of exotic species are based on the DNR Exotic Species Control Manual. Specific control techniques and timing will be under the direction of the Naturalist.

SIGNAGE

Being one of the heavier used parks in the County Park system; enforcement of rules clearly is an important issue to insure safety and enjoyment of the park. Dane County Parks has only one Park Ranger on staff weekends for the entire park system November through April. During the higher use months, May through October, the number increases to three. The Ranger responsible for Prairie Moraine Park is expected to monitor approximately half of the County geographically; therefore, time spent at any one park is limited.

Almost all park enforcement has been done historically by expecting user compliance to signage placed in the park by staff and volunteers. Signage is divided into four types:

1. Interpretive (Poetry, Geologic Significance Information, etc.)
2. Regulatory (On-Off Leash Boundary Signs)
3. Informational (Park Trail Map)
4. Directional (Arrow Sign)

Regulatory signs have been of most significance at the park in an effort to enforce boundaries and dog waste pick up rules. Regulatory signs can also detract from the aesthetics of the park; any signs placed in the park must first be approved by parks staff.

Currently; regulatory signage is the only barrier delineating on and off leash areas. As stated prior in the report; Dane County Parks will continue to monitor compliance of this rule to determine if constructing a fence is necessary. All park users are encouraged to remind dog owners who willingly or intentionally disobey the on leash rules that their actions may result in construction of a fence.

Regulatory signage has also been placed on the south side of Wesner Road to discourage users from encroaching on private property to the south. Also, signage and snow fencing has been used in an effort to discourage use of volunteer trails. Volunteer trails often traverse perpendicular to the slope and cause soil erosion. Park users should remain on designated trails to prevent soil erosion. Temporary barriers must be left in place until vegetation re-establishes on exposed soils. A suggestion was also made to place barriers at each end of volunteer trails, instead of one as has been the current practice.

As parking lot improvements are completed; informational signage should be placed at all entrances into the park identifying delineated use areas and park rules. These same signs should be placed at the proposed gates leading to the moraine overlook areas if a fence is constructed.

Possible interpretive signage may include geologic/viewshed information on top of the moraine, historical site information around building remnants, vegetation management information, and poetry.

Due to the high number of pet exercise users; it is recommended that interpretive signage regarding the significance of the terminal moraine and the history of the IAT be placed on the centrally relocated kiosk at the staging area. As previously discussed; Prairie Moraine Park offers an outstanding geological education opportunity. Lee Clayton, Geologist for the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey has stated Prairie Moraine Park is **THE** best place in the Midwest to view a moraine.

A second educational opportunity for the park could include signage explaining what the Ice Age National Scenic Trail is and why it exists at Prairie Moraine Park. Dane County Parks should work closely with the National Park Service to develop interpretive signage for the trail.

Interpretive signage should be placed throughout the park as funding/interest dictates.

Directional signage needs are limited at the park. Areas to consider may include where the mowed grass trails intersect the gravel access road to reinforce use of designated trails. In addition, directional arrows may be useful at sharp trail bends that have historically shown signs of "short cut" volunteer paths.

OTHER PARK MANAGEMENT/RECOMMENDATIONS

911 TOWER

The 911 tower should not have trails designed for pedestrian use within 150' for safety reasons. (falling ice) Regulatory signage delineating this buffer zone should be considered.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer efforts are encouraged at Dane County Parks. The formation of a "Friends of Prairie Moraine Park" group could help to shorten the length of time it takes to implement recommendations suggested in this planning report. Dollars for park improvements and land acquisition can be generated via fund raising events. Volunteers may also help park staff with the preparation of grant applications for additional dollars. It may be possible that a Friends group could raise money to fund a park supervisor position that could help selling park permits and enforcing park rules.

At the time of this report, there has still been evidence of segregation between the different user groups at public informational meetings. Formation of a single Friends group would be an excellent way to combine efforts and move ahead with improvements recommended in this plan. All volunteer efforts should be coordinated through Louise Goldstein, Adult Conservation Team Manager.

NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

Maintaining positive neighbor relationships is an ongoing task to consider for this park due to the high volume of users and traffic that is generated. If limited parking is allowed on the north side of Wesner Road, it must be done in a manner not to obstruct emergency vehicle access. Dane County Parks should continue to keep adjacent landowners involved in future planning processes.

WASTE COLLECTION SITES

There has been frequent requests for more dog waste collection barrels located on the north portion of the dog exercise area. Typically waste collection barrels are located in areas that allow truck access for pick up. Because of the high visibility of these collection sites, care should be taken to locate them in the least obtrusive manner.

VIII. Acquisition

Future acquisition of lands adjacent to Prairie Moraine Park will be considered for both IAT and pet exercise areas. Ice Age Trail proposed acquisition areas are generally to the north and east of the current boundaries (approximately 80 total acres) to allow for another parking area/trailhead and continuation of the trail to the southeast. Pet exercise proposed acquisition areas are generally to the south of the park (approximately 80 total acres) in less environmentally sensitive areas. Proposed park expansion areas are shown on the graphic Master Plan.

Requests for more acreage to be added to the park and for more dog exercise areas to be created in the local vicinity have been common throughout the planning process; these acquisition projects could help reduce congestion and negative impacts to the park. Acquisition is often a matter of opportunity. Dane County Parks only purchases lands from willing sellers. Identification of properties within an adopted Master Plan document allows a landowner the opportunity to sell their land to the County if they choose to and makes the property eligible for some funding programs.

Many of these grant funding programs provide both State and Federal dollars under the Wisconsin DNR Stewardship Local Assistance Programs, the Recreational Trails Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Program. Dane County Parks also administers a Conservation Fund Grant Program that provides monies for approved park and open space acquisition projects to:

- Towns, villages, or cities in Dane County.
- Non-profit organizations with 501.c.3. status.
- Other governmental units in Dane County (School Districts, Lake Districts, Native American governments) .

Another possible source of funding would include private donations.

Dane County Parks has actively helped several area communities (Sun Prairie, Middleton, Waunakee) with development of their own dog exercise areas. Given the overwhelming demand and use of Prairie Moraine Park as a dog exercise facility; adjacent communities such as the City and Town of Verona, and the City of Madison, should consider development of additional facilities within the region. These may be able to be partially funded using the prior mentioned grant programs.

IX. Conclusion

Dane County Parks has been a pioneer in the area of developing dog exercise areas. Taking this leadership role has resulted in some unforeseen issues due to a lack of dog exercise area information available. Development of these facilities has been an evolutionary process and all involved parties have been learning along the way. Dane County Parks has attempted to revise and amend their management strategies for these facilities as conditions have dictated.

Now that the dog exercise program has been in place for several years, Dane County Parks should begin to more closely analyze user information and environmental impacts of these sites. This information could potentially be gathered by utilizing donated planning assistance from students at the University of Wisconsin Landscape Architecture program.

Carrying out park improvements identified in this planning report will satisfy the outlined project objectives. Because of the extreme popularity of the site as an off leash dog exercise area; expansion of this park or creation of another park within the local region is critical to lessen negative impacts to this unique site. Dane County Parks should complete an inventory and study of all existing park lands and determine if any other park sites could potentially accommodate off leash pet exercise areas. Park users should encourage other local units of government to consider provision of pet exercise areas. As the IAT is developed, sensitive trail design on the moraine is important to allow park users access to the scenic view areas without harming the resource. The environmental sensitivity and geologic significance of this park site call for implementation of this plan as soon as funding allows.