

INDIAN LAKE COUNTY PARK AND HALFWAY PRAIRIE WILDLIFE AREA MASTER PLAN



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Acknowledgments

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I. Executive Summary

Indian Lake County Park is a 791-acre property located in northwestern Dane County in the Town of Berry. The park is classified as a Recreation Park in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan; primarily serving users who are attracted to outdoor recreation with some expectation of developed access and facilities. The 64-acre spring-fed lake is named after the frequent Native American inhabitation of the area dating back more than 12,000 years ago. Native Americans used the lands around the lake extensively for hunting and fishing some 8,000 years ago to as recent as the mid 1800's. European settlement in this region began in the mid-1800s, some of their structures still exist in various conditions, most notably are the 1857 "St. Mary of the Oaks" Chapel and the 1907 Matz family house. The park is close to the Madison metro area, one of the largest population bases in the state. It is heavily used during all seasons primarily for the extensive trail systems and is one of the busiest parks in the system, especially in the winter if there is snow cover. A segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail traverses through both the park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area.

The park is located on the transition into the non-glaciated driftless area of Wisconsin and offers multiple panoramic views of both the lake and surrounding rugged countryside. The landscape of the properties is a mix of steep rolling wooded hills, agriculture fields, prairie, oak savanna, the lake and adjacent wetlands. Vegetation management activities have primarily focused on invasive species removal and oak savanna/prairie restoration. Extensive lake management efforts have been ongoing to improve aquatic plant habitat, eradicate carp and overall improve the aquatic ecosystems. Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area is a 148-acre property located immediately north of Indian Lake County Park. It is named after the cold-water stream that originates in the area and eventually flows into Black Earth Creek. The property was originally purchased to secure a corridor for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and is classified as a Wildlife Area in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan. Wildlife Areas are primarily undeveloped with the exception of limited parking access along outer fringes. Recreation use consists of public hunting, hiking, foraging, non-groomed cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, cultural interpretation, and the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The landscape of the wildlife area is a mix of crop fields that are being restored to prairie and steep wooded hillsides that have had some understory invasive species removal completed.

The planning process evaluated existing cultural, natural, and historical features in the planning area and incorporated public, stakeholder, and staff input to create the recommendations found within this report. The process included an interactive website and series of public information, local unit of government, and stakeholder meetings from March of 2022 through the fall of 2023. In addition, a survey was distributed to park patrons during the summer of 2022 to solicit comments on existing park facilities, future management, and park development ideas. Based on the public input process and staff recommendations, the following vision statement was prepared for Indian Lake County Park/Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area: *Indian Lake County Park/Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area will remain relatively undeveloped, with an emphasis on continued large-scale prairie and savanna restoration in open areas and management of the existing contiguous woodlands that provide exceptional bat habitat. The rugged, natural landscape of this park highlights the glacial history that is interpreted through the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor. Providing additional hiking/snowshoe trails in the southern third of the park will allow better separation from groomed cross country ski trails during winter months and greater mileage of hiking opportunities in the summer. Existing agriculture lands will include prairie buffer strips to improve pollinator habitat and reduce sediment delivery into the Halfway Prairie Creek watershed. A proposed future shelter and internal park road extension will reduce park congestion and improve accessibility to the youth group camp region. Trails will continue to be the primary recreation use; and will include enhanced historical, cultural and natural feature*

interpretive signage. Improvements to the dog park area will include fencing, a beach, and relocated parking that will provide separation from the lake access area. Restoring a year-round sustainable lake ecosystem is a priority.

Major plan recommendations include:

ROADWAY AND PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

- Expanded vehicle and parking access to the youth group camp.
- Additional parking lot at the proposed future shelter site to address capacity issues.
- Bike trail/maintenance access from Indian Trail Road to the youth group camp.
- Ten to fifteen car parking lot at former greenhouse location on Indian Trail Road.

DOG PARK

- Interior fence.
- Swimming beach.
- Future realigned or relocated entrance and parking facilities.
- Vault toilet.

TRAILS

- Realigned Ice Age Trail in southern half of the park.
- Additional 1 mile of groomed cross-country ski trails.
- Additional 2 miles of hiking/snowshoe trails.
- Bicycle trail/maintenance access connection between Indian Trail Road and existing parking lot/restroom facilities.

PARK AMENITIES

- New reservable timber frame shelter with restroom.
- Scenic overlook restoration/expansion.
- Accessibility improvements to the scenic overlook and youth group camp area.

SIGNAGE

- Updated interpretive signage related to the natural and cultural history of the park.
- Updated wayfinding signage.
- Investigate renaming the property in coordination with the Ho-Chunk Nation.

LAND and LAKE MANAGEMENT

- Continued oak savanna prairie restoration.
- Prairie strip/pollinator buffers at southern agriculture areas.
- Maintain and enhance large block forest habitat.
- Continued lake invasive species management.
- Dredge lake to provide long term sustainable aquatic ecosystems.

II. Property Background

Indian Lake County Park

Historically, lands surrounding what is now Indian Lake County Park were first occupied by Native Americans more than 12,000 years ago, likely attracted to the area for hunting and fishing on the multiple waterways, wetlands and rolling hillsides after the last retreat of glaciers. Native Americans occupied these lands as recently as the early 1800's continuing to camp, hunt and fish on the lands surrounding the lake until eventually being forced from the area by the United States government in the 1830s. Wisconsin Historical Society data and anecdotal historical accounts from European settlers suggest Native Americans continued to occupy the area around the lake into the 1850s.

Established in 1975, Indian Lake County Park is Dane County's largest recreation park at 791 acres. The main entrance is located on State Highway 19 about two miles west of US Highway 12. The park lies at the edge of the unglaciated or "driftless" area of southwestern Wisconsin. Here, features of both glaciated and unglaciated land are prominent. More than 8 miles of trails offer hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing; in 1994 the park was voted the best county park in Wisconsin by Wisconsin Trails magazine. State snowmobile trail corridors 21 & 36 traverse east-to-west along the north shore of the lake. A historic chapel built in 1857, is located on a hilltop with a scenic overlook providing views of the lake and surrounding valley landscape. A section of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail also winds through the property. The park includes a sledding hill with a log cabin warming house. A reservable timber frame shelter was built using trees that were sustainably harvested from county properties. The shelter area includes a restroom building and playground. Youth and scout groups can reserve the group camp facility for outings.

An unfenced 40 acre off-leash dog park is located next to the small boat launch on the west side of the lake that is accessed from the parking lot on STH 19 west of the main entrance. The use of gas motors is prohibited on Indian Lake by Town ordinance - electric motors are allowed. There have been ongoing efforts to remove invasive species and carp in the lake to improve the overall aquatic ecosystem. Fishing, ice fishing, and paddling are the primary lake recreation uses.

Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area

The 148-acre Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area is located immediately north of Indian Lake County Park. Land cover is a mix of crop fields, prairie restoration, and steep wooded hillsides. Hunting, foraging, hiking, snowshoeing and photography are the primary recreational uses. A section of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail bisects the property. A prominent historical/cultural feature of the property is the former Matz Farmstead stone ruins built in 1907 and burned down in 1949.

III. Planning Process and Public Participation Summary

Table 3-1 provides an overview of the planning process and public meetings. Other outreach efforts included press releases in the Middleton newspaper, an interactive project web page, a survey to solicit public comments, plan updates posted in the park, email updates sent to stakeholders, and three mailings to neighbors of the park. In September of 2023, the mailing list was expanded to include landowners adjacent to the planning area boundary shown on Map 3-1.

The draft master plan was posted to the County project web page for review on September 1st, 2023, and included a public comment period that was extended from 60 days to 90 days ending on December 1st, 2023.

Table 3-1: Chronological Summary of Public Involvement and Planning Process

Date	Meeting
March 2022	Natural Areas Meeting
April 2022	Lake Management, Parks Ops, Visitor and Engagement Services Meetings
April 2022	Public Information Meeting Notices
April 2022	Ice Age Trail Alliance Meeting
May 2022	Friends of Indian Lake County Park
	May 16, 2022 Public Information Meeting - Lussier Family Heritage Center-Hybrid Zoom
June, 2022	June 6, 2022 Public Information Meeting - Town of Berry Shelter June 6, 2022 Presentation Town of Berry Board
Fall 2022	Dane County Land Conservation Ag Buffer Strip Field Recon
Fall 2022	Dane County Parks Planning Staff Field Recon
February-May 2023	LWRD Staff Review Draft Recommendations
May 2023	May 24th Dane County Park Commission Review
August 2023	August 17th Dane County Board Presentation Park Shelter
September 2023	September 18th Public Information Meeting - Town of Berry
September 2023	September 26, 2023 Public Information Meeting - Lussier Family Heritage Center – Hybrid Zoom
November 2023	November 4th Public Information Meeting – Indian Lake County Park Shelter and Walking Tour
November 2023	November 15th Dane County Park Commission Update Draft Plan
December 2023	December 6th Dane County Park Commission Review Public Comments
January 2024	January 10th Dane County Park Commission Update Draft Plan
January 2024	January 24th Dane County Park Commission Approve Draft Plan
Feb. 2024	February 15th County Board Adopt Plan RES. 309

The following hope/concern/comment themes were heard throughout the public input process prior to preparation of the draft plan:

- Enjoy the park as is, retain natural character.
- Don't over develop the park or recently added additional lands.
- Overall satisfaction with existing facilities, exception signage (interpretive/wayfinding).
- Dog park should be fenced, parking improvements and water access needed.
- More trails are needed to resolve conflict between groomed ski trails and hikers/dogs.

Some of the comments and suggestions heard during the planning process that were not included in the plan recommendations were related to adding equestrian trails, mountain bike trails, camping and disc golf. With existing concerns of mixed use in winter causing user conflict on groomed ski trails and overall trail capacity issues; adding mountain biking and equestrian trails was not considered. Related, the overall theme of high satisfaction with the park as it currently is and Ice Age Trail National Scenic Trail corridor landscape trended toward much lower impact park recreation recommendations and did not include disc golf or additional camping areas.

The plan recommends development of a paved road and parking area that will serve the youth group camp and sledding hills, which are currently only accessible by foot. Many of the public comments received were opposed to the proposed addition of paved surfaces in the park and increased parking. Several of the comments received against these proposed improvements stated that park users should have to walk or should visit a different park if they are not able to physically get to a recreation destination or amenity.

Dane County Parks is committed to providing outdoor access for all and there are a number of people who would benefit from having improved access to the group camp/sledding hill area. There are also a number of people who can't hike on the existing natural surface trail network that would also be able to use the proposed paved bike trail/maintenance access to further explore Indian Lake County Park. The youth group camp area is the most used outdoor education venue in the entire county park system and is often used by schools for outdoor field trips; the proposed group camp road insures people of all accessibility levels are able to participate. Other people who may benefit from improved access to the group camp might be grandparents wanting to bring grandkids sledding or parents with very young kids who can't make the walk back. In addition, it would eliminate the need for sledders to walk on the groomed trails to access the hill.

The proposed group camp road would also provide year-round reliable access for maintenance of the existing vault toilet building and warming house. Currently, maintenance vehicle access to these facilities is extremely limited by steep slopes and the lack of any direct and improved surface access roads.

A summary of comments related to the proposed youth group camp road and parking areas, and supporting exhibits is found within Appendix 1.

IV. Inventory and Analysis

Regional Context

Inventory

Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area are in the NW portion of Dane County in the Township of Berry. Surrounding land use is a mixture of agriculture, woodlands, and light residential development. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail transects north-to-south through the park and wildlife area. The rugged rural landscape provides an ideal nature escape for urban Dane County residents. These properties are primarily accessed by personal vehicles with limited transportation alternatives. The Highway 12 bike path and STH 19 provide limited bicycle access for more advanced riders. Indian Trail Road is a popular on-road bicycle route alternative to STH 19. Major existing recreation opportunities in the area are primarily found within the Wisconsin DNR Lower Wisconsin Riverway area lands that are about 8 miles west of the park. Walking Iron County Wildlife Area and Recreation Park are also adjacent to this complex of public lands along the east side of the Wisconsin River between the Villages of Sauk City and Mazomanie. In addition to the Ice Age Trail National Scenic Corridor, there are several more Dane County Parks properties within the region including Half Way Prairie Schoolhouse historical site, Festge, Salmo Pond and Lussier County Parks, Phil's Woods and Upper Mud/Crystal Lake Wildlife Areas. Map 4-1 provides a regional recreation and transportation overview.

Analysis

- Scale and location of Indian Lake County Park make it ideal for the interpretation of glacial history.
- Transportation options to get to the park are limited.
- Lake-related recreation opportunities are limited in the southwest driftless region of Dane County.
- Rugged glacial terrain is ideal for expanding trail-based recreation.

Land Cover and Vegetation

Inventory

Primary land cover is a mix of open space (water, prairie/grasslands, agriculture) and woodland, combined, these are the largest land coverage types. Developed park lands are a fraction of the total of acreage. Table 4-1 and Map 4-2 summarize existing land cover and vegetation.

Table 4-1: Existing Land Cover (acres)

Existing Land Cover (acres)	Indian Lake County Park	Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area
Cropland	109	40
Buildings / Structures/Pavement	11	2
Woodland	416	59
Open Water	78	0
Prairie	41	40
Cool Season Grasses	97	7
Wetland	39	0
Total	791	148

Analysis

- Mix of large-scale open grassland/agriculture and contiguous woodlot provide excellent habitat for a variety of diverse plant and animal species.
- Park and wildlife area are relatively undeveloped and provide a unique semi remote experience in close proximity to a large urban area.

Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species

Inventory

The large areas of open space and woodlands provide habitat for several Threatened and Endangered Species that have been documented within the project area boundary. The following seven species occurrences have been documented on or near the properties through a Wisconsin DNR Endangered Resources Preliminary Assessment request in April of 2022: Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, Prairie Leafhopper, Northern Long-eared Bat, Eastern Pipistrelle (bat), , Prairie Vole, , , and Wilcox's Panic Grass. In addition, this area has been identified as a Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Federal High Potential Zone.

Volunteer survey work has been done by the Friends of Indian Lake County Park on bat occurrences over the past several years. The following species were identified in the park: Little Brown, Big Brown, Northern Long-Eared, and Eastern Red.

Analysis

- The large contiguous woodland areas in this project area provide exceptional bat habitat. Large dead or hollow trees should be left standing unless they are creating a potential public safety issue in areas of high use. The ongoing prairie and savanna restoration projects will expand suitable habitat areas for many of the other listed species.

Soils and Topography

Inventory

Soils of both properties are predominantly classified as loam with topography consisting of steep slopes that transition into drainage basin valleys. The properties are at the edge of the unglaciated or "driftless" area of southwestern Wisconsin. Here, features of both glaciated and unglaciated land are prominent. The steep slopes of exposed rock indicate that this valley was never completely covered with ice. The outwash plain by the lake was formed when glacial meltwater carried large quantities of silt and sand into the valley. Map 4-3 presents soils and topography.

Analysis

- The combination of thin loamy soils and steep topography limit suitable park and trail development areas.
- Soils and steep topography park development suitability limitations are also an opportunity for continued preservation of the rugged glacial landscapes in the park and wildlife area.
- Rugged topography provides premier hiking, cross country skiing, and snowshoe trail recreation opportunities.

Recreational Facilities and Uses Inventory

Both properties offer recreation opportunities and facilities as shown in Table 4-2. Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area recreation uses include hunting, hiking, wildlife observation, non-groomed cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Recreation facility development in lands classified as wildlife areas is relatively limited. Indian Lake County Park is classified as a recreation park and has a wider variety of more developed opportunities that include a dog park, paddling, fishing, archery hunting by permit, groomed cross country skiing, picnicking, and hiking. A common thread between both properties is the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Existing recreation uses are shown on Map 4-4.

Table 4-2: Existing Recreational Facilities and Uses

Existing Recreational Facilities and Uses	Indian Lake County Park	Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area
Camping (youth group site)	✓	
Canoe/Kayak Launch	✓	
Cross-country Skiing	✓	✓
Dog Park	✓	
Fishing	✓	
Foraging	✓	✓
Hiking Trails	✓	✓
Historical/Cultural Feature	✓	✓
Hunting ¹	✓	✓
Picnic Area	✓	
Play Area	✓	

Restrooms	✓	
Shelter	✓	
Sledding	✓	
Snowmobile Trail	✓	
Snowshoeing	✓	✓
Trapping		✓
Wildlife Viewing	✓	✓

¹ Archery hunting only (permit required) for the park.

Existing Property Special Designations

The majority of the existing public lands within the project planning boundary have special designations based on grant funding, agreements, easements, and property classifications.

These existing designations may define or limit land management and recreation activities. The following requirements and restrictions apply:

INDIAN LAKE COUNTY PARK - Established 1975 (791 Acres)

Most of the park land and facilities were acquired or developed with Federal or State grant funds administered through the Wisconsin DNR State Stewardship program.

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Acquisition Grants (LAWCON)

- Requires the grant property to be open for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

State Stewardship Development Grant

- Requires grant property be open for public outdoor recreation and facilities to be accessible to persons with disabilities.

State Lake Protection Grant

- Requires grant property to be open to public access for uses consistent with the protection or improvement of a lake’s water quality or its natural ecosystem.

Ice Age National and State Scenic Trail

- A portion of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail traverses through the park.
- The trail is managed by a partnership between the National Park Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Ice Age Trail Alliance.
- The trail is open for hiking, backpacking and snowshoeing. Many segments also support cross-country skiing.

Conservation Easements

- The Ice Age National Scenic Trail public access, conservation and development right easements were acquired with State Stewardship and Federal LAWCON

- grant funds to preserve agriculture lands, conserve scenic open spaces and provide limited recreational access (hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing) for the trail.
- An Ice Age National Scenic Trail public access, conservation and development right easement is located in the SW portion of the park as well as on adjacent private lands. Public access is currently limited to county owned lands.
- A Dane County Conservation Easement was purchased on private lands that are within the viewshed of the park to perpetually preserve the property in a natural condition. There is no public access.

OTHER SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS WITHIN INDIAN LAKE COUNTY PARK

Motorboat prohibition

- Town of Berry ordinance prohibiting motor boats on Indian Lake.

Snowmobile Trail

- Dane County Parks is responsible for operating and maintaining state-funded miles of snowmobile trails throughout Dane County through the State Snowmobile Program. The CP Riders Snowmobile Club maintains a snowmobile trail within the park and has land use agreements with adjacent private landowners for the use and maintenance of the trail.

HALFWAY PRAIRIE WILDLIFE AREA - Established 2014 (148 Acres)

Ice Age National Scenic Trail State Stewardship Grant

- Allowed Recreation Uses: Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, Hiking (Includes Ice Age Trail), Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing, Outdoor Education, Photography (Drone by permit only), Foraging
- A Land Management Plan prepared by the Ice Age Trail Alliance provides additional detailed management prescriptions that applies to these parcels.
- Properties that include these special designations are presented on Map 4-5.

Dane County Park Land Classifications

The Dane County Park system has grown to more than 17,000 acres in size and contains a diverse mixture of land cover types including wetlands, agriculture, prairies, forests, historical buildings, and developed park lands. In response, the Park Commission created a park classification system that divided county park lands into six categories: Recreation Parks, Natural Resource Areas, Forests, Historical/Cultural Sites, Wildlife Areas, and Trails. The classification system is further defined in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan and identifies management practices for each category that provides the public with a clear expectation of what types of recreation uses would occur on these properties and generally how they will be managed.

Recreation Park

Indian Lake County Park is classified as a Recreation Park. A recreation park consists of land that is specifically set aside for active and passive recreation uses. A recreation park

primarily serves users who are attracted to outdoor recreation ***with an expectation of using some type of developed access or facilities.*** It may provide facilities that offer a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities, cater to only one predominant activity (special use), or include lands under a trail corridor classification that offer connections to other park and trail systems as is the scenario with the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor that traverses through both the park and wildlife area.

Trails

Trail use on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail is limited to hiking, backpacking and snowshoeing. The Ice Age NST is typically a native surfaced (dirt) footpath that is about 3' wide. Motorized recreation is not allowed on the Ice Age NST or Dane County shared-use trails. Other recreation uses that may occur within the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor lands include hunting, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, foraging and some limited primitive camping opportunities. Management of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and surrounding corridor lands also includes extensive vegetation management with the goal of providing users with a pre-settlement landscape experience dating back to the glacial era some 15,000 years ago.

Wildlife Area

Wildlife Areas such as Halfway Prairie, consist of land that is primarily undeveloped with the exception of limited parking opportunities along the outer fringes. The lands function similar to DNR Wildlife Areas and are open to nature-based outdoor activities. Management practices focus on providing wildlife habitat and undeveloped recreation uses such as hunting, trapping, hiking, foraging, snowshoeing, fishing and cross-country skiing. Land covers usually consist of forest, wetlands, grasslands and working farmlands. All Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fishing, hunting and trapping regulations apply to County Wildlife Areas unless otherwise posted. Each property may have specific restrictions for use based on proximity to residential or developed areas, endangered resources, and other issues that have been identified in a public planning process. Similar to a Natural Resource Area, users are encouraged to enjoy the area as-is and trail access of any type is extremely limited.

Cultural and Historic Feature Inventory

A cultural and historic inventory was completed to identify features that should be avoided and protected from future land disturbing activities at the park and wildlife area. The National Park Service defines cultural resources as being "Physical evidence or place of past human activity: site, object, landscape, structure; or a site, structure, landscape, object or natural feature of significance to a group of people traditionally associated with it." Cultural and historic features may be protected by a variety of different regulatory agencies under federal, state, or local mandates and guidelines. There is very distinct evidence of prior Native American inhabitation and Euro-American history on both properties, these two cultures intersected the heaviest during the European emigration to this area in the mid 1800's. General cultural feature locations are shown on Map 4-6.

Human Settlement Features

Evidence suggests that the earliest people of Wisconsin arrived about 12,000 years ago or more. Their existence and history were not well documented in a Euro-American sense until Europeans began to move into the area in the early 18th century. Because of the abundant wildlife and fisheries within the park, several Native American encampments, worksites, and other features have been documented and cataloged. Pre-settlement travel by Native American people to and from this area was done by a trail that parallels what is now portions of State Highway 19.

In 1804, the United States government required the Sauk and Fox tribes led by Chief Black Hawk to cede land claims in Southern Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. The conflict between the tribes and Euro-American settlers culminated in what is known as the battle of Wisconsin Heights. A historical marker at the boat launch describes the “Indian Lake Passage” that was on the route to the battleground. Recent consultation with the Dane County Historical Society has suggested that although Indian Lake County Park is in the general region of the battle of Wisconsin Heights, the park itself has no significant connection to this event and has suggested removal/relocation of the historical marker.

By the early 1830’s, the federal government had a major impact on furthering Euro-American settlement in Dane County by establishing a network of military roads to transport supplies and mail between forts established for frontier defense. This allowed for a larger presence of European settlers to establish homesteads in and near the park. The lake was first named after European settlers during the 1830’s but by 1873 the name “Indian L.” first appeared on maps. Anecdotal settler accounts suggest Native Americans continued to inhabit the Indian Lake area well into the 1850’s.



*Chief Black Hawk
Wisconsin Historical Society*

A number of European settlement structures still exist on these properties, most notable are the 1852 “St. Mary of the Oaks” Chapel and the 1907 Matz family house.

V. Planning Purpose

Indian Lake County Park is the largest recreation park in the Dane County park system. With the adjacent County owned lands within the Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area, the two properties provide nearly 1000 acres of public land. There has never been a master plan completed for either property.

The purpose of this plan is to create a long-term vision for the park and wildlife area through a consensus building process that will guide future use, facility development and land management while balancing resource protection with public access.

The Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Master Plan:

- Provides a vision and framework that includes public, stakeholder and staff input for use, development, management and land acquisition recommendations into the future with an emphasis on the next 10-15 years.
- Provides recommendations for recreation, land management, and habitat conservation to meet current and future needs that is based on public input and property inventory and analysis.

VI. Vision Statement

Based on the plan evaluation of historical, cultural, natural and recreational features; public input process and staff recommendations, the following vision statement was prepared for Indian Lake County Park/Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area:

Indian Lake County Park/Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area will remain relatively undeveloped, with an emphasis on continued large-scale prairie and savanna restoration in open areas and management of the existing contiguous woodlands that provide exceptional bat habitat. The rugged, natural landscape of this park highlights the glacial history that is interpreted through the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor. Providing additional hiking/snowshoe trails in the southern third of the park will allow better separation from groomed cross-country ski trails during winter months and greater mileage of hiking opportunities in the summer. Existing agriculture lands will include prairie buffer strips to improve pollinator habitat and reduce sediment delivery into the Halfway Prairie creek watershed. A proposed future shelter area and internal park road extension will reduce park congestion and improve accessibility to the youth group camp region. Trails will continue to be the primary recreation use; and will include enhanced historical, cultural and natural feature interpretive signage. Improvements to the dog park

area will include fencing, a beach and relocated parking that will provide separation from the lake access area. Restoring a year-round sustainable lake ecosystem is a priority.

VII. Plan Recommendations

Recommendations found within this master plan were based on the following:

- Public/stakeholder/Town input.
- Dane County Parks staff input.
- Dane County Park Commission input.
- Survey responses.
- Inventory and analysis planning considerations outlined in Section IV.
- Accessibility requirements per the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Access recommendations per Madison Dane County Public Health.

Master plan recommendations are intended to provide a shared vision for future property historical, cultural and natural feature protection strategies, land and lake management objectives and park development that was arrived at through an inclusive consensus building process. Plan recommendations should be revisited every 5 years or as necessary to address changing conditions and recreation trends.

Indian Lake County Park Recommendations

Recreation

Trails

Trail oriented recreation will continue to be the primary recreation use at the park; specifically, Ice Age National Scenic Trail, hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. These relatively low impact trail uses are consistent with the desire to maintain and enhance the glacial "driftless" area landscapes, avoid fragmentation of the existing large-scale ecosystems and input heard throughout the planning process to maintain and add more mileage to existing trail uses.

In response to many concerns heard throughout the planning process regarding winter conflicts between hikers, dog walkers and skiers on groomed cross country ski trails, approximately 2.2 miles of hiking/snowshoeing trails are proposed on the new southern addition to the park. Additional hiking/snowshoeing trails in this area of the park could be considered if increasing use justifies. A 10-15 car parking lot is proposed on Indian Trail Road that would provide walk in access to the southern region of the park and Ice Age National Scenic Trail. This parking lot could also be used for hiking/snowshoeing in the winter, limited archery hunt access; but is not envisioned to provide access to groomed cross country ski trails. An approximate 1 mile of additional groomed cross country ski trail is proposed that will provide a connection around the base of the steep hill on the new southern addition to the park. The extremely steep and eroding 0.2 mile interior connector cross country ski trail will be closed and restored to natural conditions. Investigate an alternative location for the connection to the ridge line trail if a sustainable alignment can be identified with input from cross country skiers.



The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is proposed to be realigned through the central portion of the park and follow the ridge on the new southern addition to the park before eventually exiting to Indian Trail Road on lands that were acquired for the Ice Age Corridor in 2019.

A paved bicycle trail is proposed from Indian Trail Road to the existing restroom/shelter area. Indian Trail Road is a very popular for cyclists who want to avoid riding on STH 19, the proposed connection would provide cyclists rural access to public water and restroom facilities. This trail connection would also provide expanded accessible hiking opportunities to one of the most rugged areas of the park and would be made after the proposed roadway connection to the youth group camp was completed.

Table 7-1 and Map 7-1 present existing and proposed trails.

Table 7-1: Trail Mileage Recommendations

Trail Segment	Current Mileage	Proposed Mileage	Comment
Ice Age Trail	2.9	3.1	Realignment
Cross Country Ski	7.5	8.3	Includes .2 steep trail reduction.
Hiking	10.6	12.8	2.2 new south expansion area.
Snowshoe	1.4	3.6	2.2 new south expansion area.
Snowmobile			No change
Paved Bicycle		1.0	Includes proposed youth group camp road

Dog Park

Another consistent comment heard throughout the planning process was the desire to install a perimeter fence around the dog park area, while maintaining an open loop around the lake for park users that do not want to enter the dog park. The exact location and extent of the fence is to be field determined. In addition, a dog swimming beach area

is proposed to provide a better alternative than the boat ramp for people who want to let their dogs swim.

Parking capacity issues for the dog park were another concern heard both from staff and the public. Short term a new 30-40 car parking lot exclusively for dog park visitors should be investigated west of the existing gravel lot. Longer term, dog park access could be considered off Lilac Lane with Town approval and if sight line distances improve with the pending DOT Hwy 19 realignment; or CTH K if suitable property could be acquired from willing sellers.

Lake Access

Parking capacity issues were also heard regarding the lake access facility related to shared use with the dog park. With ongoing efforts to improve the Indian Lake aquatic ecosystems and fishery, the lake has become an increasingly popular destination for paddling, fishing and ice fishing. Provision of a separate dog park parking area will greatly improve this issue. The Wisconsin DOT is also planning to lower the grade of STH 19 and pave the ROW apron as part of the pending highway reconstruction project in 2024. Along with a realignment of the existing entry drive, park visitor ingress/egress to the lake access and dog exercise area will be significantly improved.

An accessible parking space and path should be provided to the accessible fishing pier at the lake access site. If space allows, adding designated boat trailer parking spaces should be considered. Lake access parking improvements should also investigate re-grading and or paving the southern half of the lake access road to eliminate gravel washing into the ramp area. A vault toilet should be added that would service both the dog exercise area and lake access site.

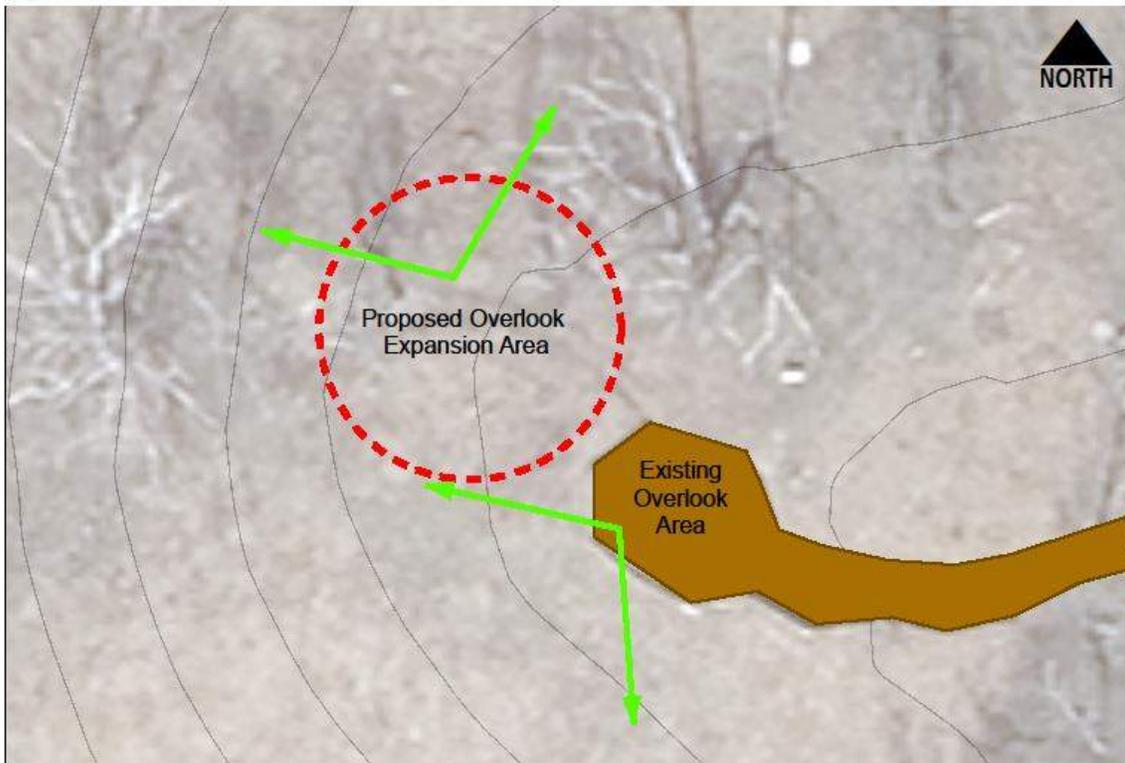
Scenic Overlook

The scenic overlook is perhaps one of the most visited locations in the park. Historically there have been several proposals to make various improvements that included benches, fences, pathways and signage. Given the increasing amount of use of the park, an adjacent expansion area immediately to the north of the existing overlook should be considered. Related, all future park development projects proposed in the valley to the west should be located to provide the least visual impact possible from the overlook.





Overlook Expansion Concept

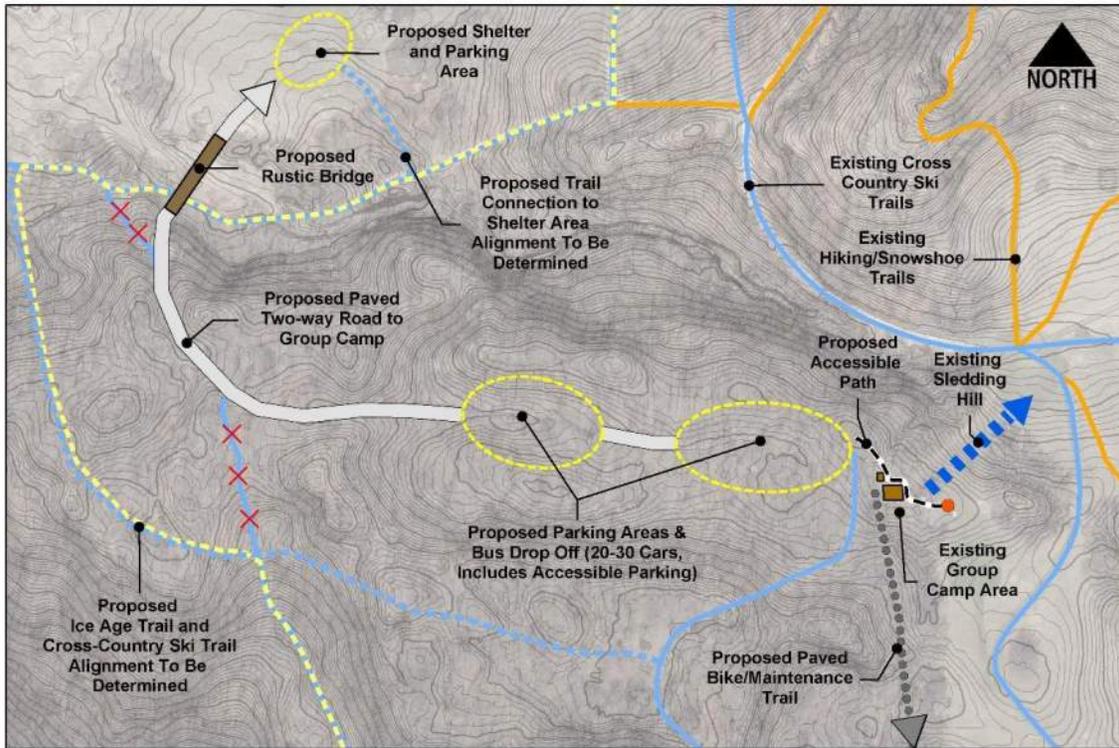


Long term access to the overlook both for maintenance and potentially for persons with mobility limitations could be improved if lands to the north were acquired from willing sellers. Further analysis will be completed to investigate improving accessibility of the existing route to the chapel/overlook in the short term.

Youth Group Camp/Sledding Hill

Currently both vehicle and pedestrian access is limited to the youth group camp/sledding hill area, especially in the winter. An approximate 1/2-mile seasonal vehicle access road and bridge is proposed from the existing parking lot to the youth group camp area.

The proposed road would result in realignment of the existing hiking/cross country ski trail slightly to the south. Parking for 20-30 cars is also proposed west of the warming house that would provide greater accessibility for winter recreation, special events, and youth group camping. Both the road and the parking areas will be designed to be sensitive to the current site conditions and surroundings, taking into account existing topography, vegetation, and viewsheds. The proposed road and parking areas are intended to improve year round accessibility and inclusivity for a variety of users to this region of the park and will provide reliable maintenance access to the youth group camp facilities.



Document Path: H:\Parks\Mapping\Parks\IndianLake\Planning\MasterPlan\Proposed_Maps\GroupCampParkingConcept.mxd

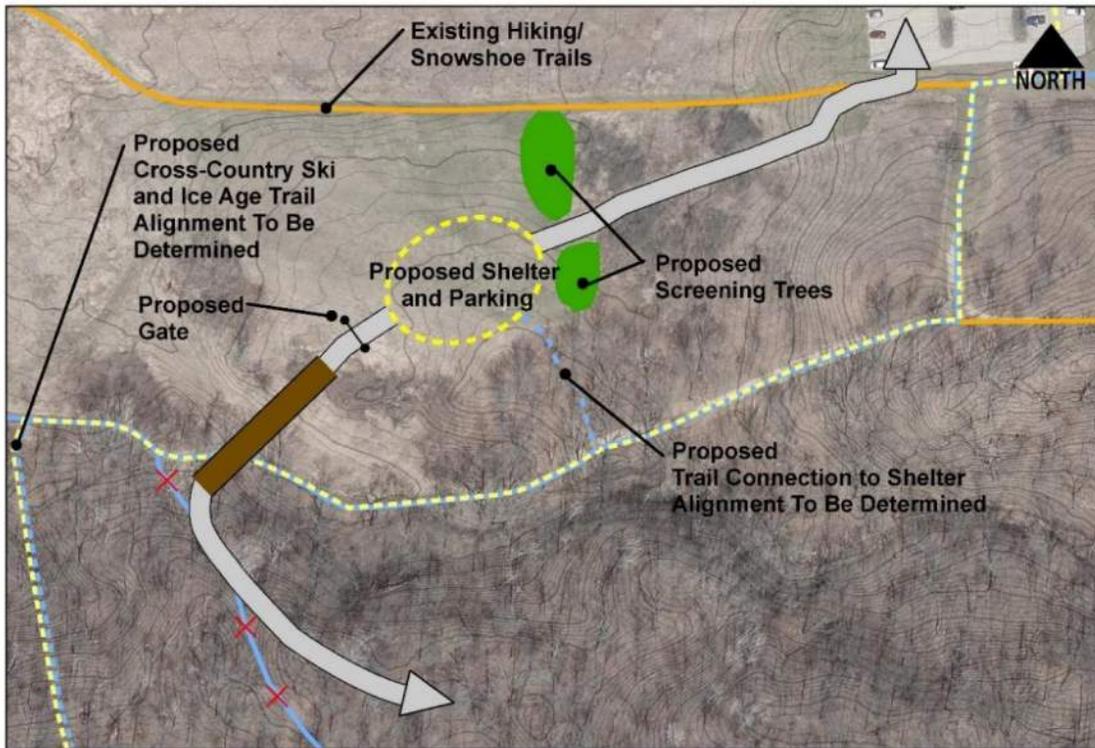
Day Use and Picnicking

Insufficient parking capacity and related visitor congestion concerns were re-occurring themes heard during the public input process. Staff and public have reported seeing the main day use parking lot filled and vehicles parked along the entry road out to STH 19 on multiple occasions. In response, an approximate 500' extension of the park entry drive from the main parking lot to a second 30-40 car parking lot is proposed. The proposed road and parking area should be designed in a manner to accommodate the possibility of adding a second future picnic shelter/restroom building. All of these proposed facilities should be planned in a manner to have the least possible visual impact on the park; especially from the overlook. Related, a planting of screening trees is recommended short term east of the proposed parking lot and shelter area.



Proposed Shelter Area Concept Plan

Updated January 2024



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Agriculture, Lake and Vegetative Management

Agriculture

Agricultural land use serves several purposes on many County owned properties including Indian Lake County Park; it provides locally grown food, supports the local farming economy, maintains existing rural landscapes and is an excellent transitional land management practice if prairie restoration is the long term goal. Leasing land for hay and other cool season grass cover crops can be an effective way to provide pollinator habitat, bird nesting areas and reduce erosion and related sediment delivery to local waterways.

A large portion of the nearly 300-acre parcel of southern park expansion area that was acquired in 2020 is currently being actively farmed through a lease agreement with an area farmer. Staff from the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department met at the park with the Sand County Foundation in 2022 to explore the possibility of adding prairie filter strips to some of the agriculture fields north and south of Indian Trail Road. Prairie buffer strips reduce soil erosion and improve water quality through the use of native plantings that act as a sponge and slow soil runoff from rain. Prairie buffer strips are planned with input from farmers who are cropping the land to insure they are compatible with ongoing agriculture practices. More information about prairie filter strips is available on the Sand County Foundation website:

<https://sandcountyfoundation.org/our-work/soil-and-water-conservation/prairie-filter-strips>

Lake Management

Significant efforts have been ongoing at Indian Lake to restore and improve aquatic ecosystems through carp eradication and aquatic plant management. Currently the lake is not deep enough to sustain an over wintering fishery and an aeration system is in place to manage oxygen levels. Water based recreation on lakes is somewhat limited in the southwest Driftless region of Wisconsin, with most lakes being small and artificially created through some type of impoundment system. This often results in high recreation demands competing for limited water space.

Given the number of past efforts to restore the aquatic ecosystem and fishery of the lake and significant increase in popularity for water recreation, dredging should be considered as a long-term sustainable way to permanently improve water quality, increase aquatic plant diversity, improve dissolved oxygen, improve the fishery and fish habitat. Similar to lake improvement efforts at Stewart Lake County Park, sediment removal facilities should be installed to treat area runoff prior to it entering the lake. Soils reports indicate sandy substrate dredge material in the southwest region of the lake exist that could be dewatered on site to provide fill needed to level the area of the proposed new shelter/parking lot area. Additional boring information would be needed to determine exact size and depth of proposed dredge area. A lake management plan was completed by Dane County in 2017, recommendations of that plan are still being implemented.

Vegetation Management

There has been a variety of ongoing vegetation management practices undertaken at the park by both staff and volunteers primarily consisting of invasive species management and oak savanna/prairie restoration. The priority restoration area has been in the valley south of the chapel area, a timber harvest was completed in 2021 to remove canopy and encourage oak regeneration for savanna restoration. There have also been efforts to restore and expand a small remnant prairie south of the dog park. The priority for invasive species control are ones that are still able to be controlled, example hedge parsley and leafy spurge.

The park has a very large contiguous central woodlot that provides excellent bat habitat, shade for cooler temperatures in the summer and snow melt protection on cross country ski trails in the winter. Short term management of the forest could include removal of red maple and black locust. Large interior dead trees that aren't adjacent to trails or causing public safety concerns should be left standing for habitat.

A consultant contracted forest stewardship management plan should be completed for the wooded areas of the park. A prairie and savanna restoration plan should be completed by Dane County land management staff to provide the public with an understanding of long term goals and future stewardship guidance to volunteers. The Dane County Naturalist is responsible for overseeing preparation of all vegetation management plans for Dane County Park properties. Preparation of vegetation management plans includes opportunities for public input and final plans are posted on the Dane County Parks website.

Map 7-2 presents existing and proposed vegetation cover areas in the park and wildlife area.

Cultural Considerations

Ho-Chunk Nation

Dane County Parks strives to preserve cultural features in place by avoiding ground disturbing activities in areas of known recorded archaeological/historical sites. Cultural feature inventory completed for this plan was derived from Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) data and environmental review conducted by the Wisconsin DOT for the Highway 19 expansion project. Based on existing archaeological surveys, it is evident there are higher densities of Native American cultural feature sites around the lake and along the Highway 19 corridor.

Given the documented accounts of regular Native American inhabitation in this area, it is quite possible there are additional sites that have not been identified. To minimize inadvertent disruption to unknown sites, proposed future park development projects should be located on prior disturbed areas if possible. Existing maintenance roads/trails, fields that were under cultivation and former building sites are all lands that have already had some degree of prior disturbance. Proposed park development projects that are near existing recorded sites should have additional archaeological review conducted before finalizing proposed ground disturbance areas.

Evidence of the first people to inhabit this area dates back to the last glacial retreat some 12,000 years ago. The name Indian Lake first appeared on European settlement maps in 1873, likely originating from Native American people who were frequently seen hunting, fishing and camping in the area around the lake. In 2022, Dane County renamed lands within the North Mendota Natural Resource Area boundary to the Waakikižu Natural Resource Area. Waakikižu is a Ho-Chunk Nation word meaning community or togetherness.

Many of the lands throughout the Dane County park system have significant historical connections to the Ho-Chunk Nation people. Dane County Parks should continue working with the Ho-Chunk Nation to identify culturally important park lands that also could be considered for renaming to preserve, protect and perpetuate their culture.



Ho-Chunk Nation People of the Sacred Voice
ho-chunknation.com

St. Mary of the Oaks Chapel

The St. Mary of the Oaks Chapel is a historical site located within Indian Lake County Park. The chapel is located just east of the scenic overlook and was built by German immigrant John Endres in 1857. In this area, most immigrants came from Germany, and many had stone masonry skills. The chapel reflects the building methods of German settlers and simple rural chapels of their homelands.

The exact reason why the chapel was constructed is unclear, however most have an underlying spiritual gratitude theme related to the well-being of the Endres family during a diphtheria flu epidemic. In 1926 the Endres family sold the farm to the Ballweg family, and in 1959 it was purchased by the Marx family who donated the chapel and 1 acre of land surrounding it to Dane County in 1963. Preservation and maintenance of the chapel is required by heirs and assigns forever through a deed restriction. Over the years the various families who owned the property, their descendants, volunteers and eventually Dane County have continued to restore and refurbish the chapel and stairway access as needed. The chapel continues to draw hundreds of visitors every year. Access to the chapel for persons with mobility issues could potentially be improved if lands to the north could be acquired from willing sellers; and further studies will be completed to improve accessibility on the existing route in the short term.



Signage and Outdoor Education

A signage plan was completed for the park in 2018, most of the recommendations of this plan are still current. Since the completion of the signage plan, the Dane County Historical Society has requested that the Indian Lake Passage historical marker located at the lake access parking area be removed and or relocated to a more appropriate location. The sign pertains to the history of the Blackhawk War in 1832 and the route Chief Blackhawk followed while being pursued by U.S. militia. The Historical Society has since stated that Indian Lake was not on the actual retreat route and therefore the sign is not accurate. The Indian Lake Passage historical marker should be removed from the park and returned to the Dane County Historical Society.

Several of the comments heard during the planning process pertained to a need for additional interpretive and educational signage. Some topics could include Native

American history of this region, glacial and Ice Age National Scenic Trail information and educational signage about the proposed prairie buffer strips. New interpretive signage panels were installed by Dane County Parks at the former Matz Farmstead parking lot in 2017 and the St. Mary of the Oaks chapel in 2021. Per the 2018 Indian Lake signage plan recommendations, the development of interpretive signage could be a partnership project with the Friends of Indian Lake.

Indian Lake County Park is highly used by a wide variety of groups for outdoor education throughout the entire year. Most of these outdoor workshops are held out of the existing shelter and youth group camp area. Some of the activities and topics include nature interpretation, bird watching, Ice Age Trail, land stewardship and learning to camp.

The proposed future shelter, entrance road extension and parking lot at the youth group camp will improve accessibility and expand capacity for these special events in the future.



Samantha Haas

Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Recommendations

Recreation

Recreation use at Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area includes hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing (non-groomed), foraging, snowshoeing and wildlife viewing. Photography of the stone ruins is also very popular. There are no changes to existing recreation uses proposed within the wildlife area.

Vegetative Management

There have been significant prairie restoration efforts already completed in the open field areas of the wildlife area. All of the remaining agriculture fields are proposed to be converted to prairie. A new maintenance access road is proposed to northwest hilltop field, exact alignment to be determined based on existing trees to be maintained and topography. The proposed road and future restoration mown firebreaks in the prairie could provide some additional trail mileage.

There have been some efforts by volunteers to remove invasive species from the steep wooded hillsides. The existing woodlands in the wildlife area should be included in the planning area of the consultant contracted forest stewardship management plan that is proposed for the recreation park. Alternative approaches to natural vegetation management should be considered around the Matz Farmstead to prevent invasive species from overgrowing the grounds and foundation remnants.

Cultural Considerations

The former Matz Farmstead provides a glimpse back in time to when European settlers first arrived to this region of Dane County. Existing interpretive signage provide quotes, photos and family history that help current day park users understand what life may have been like living on a farm in rural Dane County in the 1850s. The existing stone foundations are a strong complement to the story.

There has also been significant interest by the public to photograph the remnant stone foundations of the former Matz Farmstead that were constructed in 1907.

The foundations have continued to weather and deteriorate over time, and it is very possible they will completely fall down if nothing is done to stabilize them. In addition to being a historical site and because the foundations have become a popular outdoor photo destination spot, scale and scope of a stabilization project should be investigated through solicitation of proposals from firms specializing in similar types of projects.

Map 7-3 graphically presents proposed master plan recommendations.

VIII. Proposed Boundary Adjustments

At nearly 800-acres, Indian Lake County Park is the largest recreation park in the Dane County Park system. Combined with Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area, the two properties offer approximately 1,000-acres of public land. The recently purchased lands south of the park will help alleviate trail crowding and reduce the trail conflict issues between groomed cross-country skiing and hikers.

Dane County Parks only acquires land from willing land owners. This master plan recommends consideration of acquiring additional property at two locations adjacent to the park.

Lands adjacent to the northeast park boundary and south of STH 19 could provide for development of water quality improvement practices upstream of the lake and also improve vehicle access to the chapel overlook area.

Lands adjacent to the northwest boundary, south of STH 19 and east of KP could provide for long term improved access and parking for the dog park area.

Proposed future boundary adjustments are presented on Map 8-1. Land acquisition is more often based on an opportunity than identified priorities, therefore any lands available within the project area should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

IX. Action Plan

Major park improvement recommendations within this plan should be considered either short or long term initiatives. Short term projects would occur sometime within a 5-10 year timeframe, long term would occur in the future.

Short term plan recommendations include:

- Installing dog park fencing.
- Constructing new dog park parking lot area.
- Constructing dog park swimming area.
- Developing future shelter parking lot area.
- Developing internal road to youth group camp and additional parking areas.
- Developing Indian Trail Road parking lot.
- Creating prairie buffer strips on southern ag fields.
- Adding additional interpretive/educational signage.
- Lake access ADA and parking improvements.
- All trail improvement and trail expansion projects.
- Accessibility improvements to the existing chapel/scenic overlook route.
- Constructing the scenic overlook expansion area.

Long term plan recommendations include:

- Paved bike trail/maintenance access from Indian Trail Road.
- Construct second picnic shelter.
- Water quality improvements and lake dredging.

Timing of all projects should be adaptable to changing park needs and is contingent on availability of budgeted funds.

X. Summary

Overall, there are relatively few new major park improvements proposed in this plan for a park property of this scale; in addition, a substantial amount of planning effort was undertaken to locate all proposed improvements in a way that would have the least amount of visual and environmental impacts on the park.

Providing additional parking alternatives and an expanded trail system should greatly improve capacity and user conflict issues commonly heard throughout the planning process. Fencing, parking and water access improvements will improve the popularity of the dog park that currently is somewhat underutilized.

One of the most prevalent public input themes heard was; "we love the park as is", "do more of the same", "don't overdevelop the park." Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area are located very close to the highest populated area in Dane County; increasing demand for recreation use will continue to challenge the ability to preserve and provide intact landscape scale prairie and woodland ecosystems typical of the Driftless region and Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor.

Indian Lake County Park provides an excellent setting to tell the story of glacial history and the first people who lived there thousands of years ago. Continued coordination with the Ho-Chunk Nation on how the story should be told is essential.

This master plan is meant to serve as a guide for future acquisition and phased development of the park. Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be prepared for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the County population and recreation demand continues to grow, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to address changing needs and recreation trends.



Liz Boyd

APPENDIX 1

Master Plan Recommendations	Summary of Public Questions/Comments Received on August 2023 Draft Master Plan	Park Planning Staff Responses	Modifications Made to the August 2023 Draft Master Plan in Response
PROPOSED GROUP CAMP ACCESS & PARKING IMPROVEMENTS			
	<p>1. <i>What is the need for a road and parking lots at the group camp area? Related questions & comments: Those who can't walk to the sledding hill/group camp are a very small minority of users.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The youth group camp area is one of the primary function areas of the park for sledding, outdoor education workshops and group camping. There is a need to provide accessibility to the group camp/warming house area and a need to improve inclusivity for all park users. Dane County is committed to improving accessibility and inclusivity at all recreation parks. 2. Improved vehicle access for maintenance of the warming house and vault toilet is needed. 3. Improved vehicle access to the youth group camp is needed to drop off trailers/gear. 4. The proposed road/parking area provides improved trail access to the recently purchased 300-acre southern parcel added to the park in 2021, related, it is not possible to provide improved parking and access for day use from Indian Trail (Rd.) due to Town concerns, limited traffic sight distances and narrowness of the road. 5. Indian Lake County Park is classified as a recreation park; per this classification definition on page 25 of the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan, "A Recreation Park primarily serves users who are attracted to outdoor recreation with an expectation of using some type of developed access or facilities." 	None.
	<p>2. <i>Why can't the existing gravel road that extends from the existing main parking lot to the bottom of the sledding hill be utilized for the group camp access road and/or bike trail?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Multiple conflicts with existing trails and the sledding hill, see Exhibit 1. 2. Concerns about negative viewshed impacts to the savanna valley east of the group camp. 3. Steep topography constraints, see Exhibit 1. 4. Direct runoff impacts to headwaters of Halfway Prairie Creek, a cold-water stream, see Exhibit 1. 5. Approximately 400' longer linear distance of road required than proposed alignment, see Exhibit 1. 	None.

	<p>3. <i>The proposed road conflicts with and eliminates an existing cross country ski trail.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cross-country ski trail is not eliminated, it is proposed to be relocated. 2. A portion of the IAT hiking trail would also need to be relocated, the IATA is in support of the realignment. 3. The proposed ski trail realignment area south of the proposed group camp road was received favorably by some cross-country skiers at the Nov. 4th walking tour because it could create a more interesting trail with hills and curves. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed relocated cross country ski trail will be changed to the south side of the proposed group camp road, exact alignment will be coordinated in the field with members of the Nordic Ski Club, see Exhibit 1. 2. The north end of the existing IAT/cross country ski trail will be shown relocated west of the proposed group camp road on more suitable topography, exact alignment will be coordinated with members of the Nordic Ski Club and Ice Age Trail Alliance, see Exhibit 1.
	<p>4. <i>The proposed road and parking areas would remove many trees in the forested area of the park and open up the canopy.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed group camp access road requires limited tree removals as the corridor is essentially already cleared to a suitable width. 2. The proposed road and parking areas are planned in locations that avoid impacts to existing desirable canopy trees. 3. The majority of the existing woody vegetation in the proposed parking areas is invasive buckthorn and lower quality trees not consistent with long-term oak woodland restoration plans. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas that are suitable to locate the future group camp road and future parking lots will be shown conceptually on the master plan. Exact parking and road layout will be determined in future planning phases.
	<p>5. <i>The proposed road and parking lots change the character of the space by bringing in car noise and subjects hikers/skiers to auto exhaust.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed cross country ski trail realignment is approximately 300' south and 30' below the proposed group camp road and proposed 20-30 car parking lots. 2. The proposed new parking lots at the future shelter area and group camp road will significantly reduce density and interaction with cars in the winter. 3. Significant vehicle noise currently exists in this region of the park from both STH 19 and USH 12. 4. The trend toward greener vehicles will continue to reduce and potentially eliminate both noise and emissions going into the future. 	<p>None.</p>
	<p>6. <i>People with decreased mobility can already access the (group camp) area on the existing one lane dirt road.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This does not provide suitable accessible/inclusive access from a surface or slope perspective. 	<p>None.</p>

	<p>7. <i>The steep grassy hill east of the existing parking lot could be an alternate small sledding hill (put hay bales by a few trees) for those unable to walk farther. Having this hill available solves the problem for those probably few people or children not able to walk to the sledding hill by the hut. This could be a close-by place to sled for people who are tied to road access. Problem solved.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The steep grassy hill is the end trail runout for all 4 ski trail loops, sledding is not recommended on groomed ski trails. 2. Providing a diminished and lower quality recreation experience is not an acceptable inclusive access solution when alternatives exist. 3. The proposed group camp access road is not just for the sledding hill; it is also providing more inclusive access for youth group camping, hiking and outdoor education events throughout the year. 	None.
	<p>8. <i>The proposed bridge has no place in the existing trail system and will not allow for snow cover under the bridge deck.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walking and biking would be allowed on the proposed group camp access road, bridge and bike trail/maintenance road between the future shelter and Indian Trail (Rd.). It would provide nearly 1 mile of improved surface trail through the park for bicycles and persons with limited mobility. 2. The proposed bridge provides an alternative for hikers with mobility issues to cross the steep gulley and continue into the park on an improved surface trail with primarily slopes of 5% and less. 3. Snow base under the bridge deck can be pulled through with groomers and/or supplemented as needed from plowed road/parking area piles. 4. The bridge deck will shade the trail underneath and minimize snow melt. 5. The trend toward warmer temperatures may likely result in an extended hiking/biking season in the park. 	None.
	<p>9. <i>The proposed group camp access road and parking lots will ruin the rustic, remote, historic sense of the warming house area which is a key reason for people who come to the park.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposed group camp access road and parking lots are planned west of the group camp in an area that is visually buffered by the warming house, vault toilet, topography and vegetation. 2. The proposed group camp access road and parking lots will provide inclusivity for all people to enjoy this unique experience of the park. 	None.
	<p>10. <i>Does the plan propose to build a new larger warming house and toilet facility?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The plan recommends minimal modifications to the warming house and vault toilet to improve accessibility. 	None.

	<i>11. The proposed road and parking improvements to get people closer to the middle of the woods where the ski and hiking trails are, so the trail system would be lost.</i>	1. There is no loss of hiking or skiing trails. The proposed realignment of the hiking/ski purple loop to the south of the proposed group camp road would result in approximately 100' more of trail than the existing alignment.	None.
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PROPOSED BIKE/MAINTENANCE ACCESS ROAD & INDIAN TRAIL (RD.) PARKING AREA

Bicycle trail/maintenance road access from Indian Trail (Rd.) to the group camp.	<i>1. We don't need to pave the wilderness. The length of this road through the park is too long and disrupts the ecology. Related comments: Bicyclists do not need this access as Indian Trail has bad pavement and is not used much by bicyclists. If there would be access, it could be a very narrow dirt trail. Bicyclists no longer need pavement to ride on, as many now have new/expensive 'gravel bikes' instead of 'road bikes'. The high-tech gravel bikes with narrow tires work well on gravel as well as pavement.</i>	1. The maintenance road/bike trail is proposed to be aligned along the interior fringe and through the narrowest portion of the interior forested area of the park and will have extremely minimal impact to the forest or adjacent savanna, see Exhibit 2. 2. The proposed maintenance road/bike trail allows the bicycle community to safely access the restroom/water facilities in the park from Indian Trail (Rd.) and avoid having to ride on STH 19 to get to Matz Road from USH 12. 3. The total amount of existing and proposed paved access improvements in the entire park is about 1% of the total park area and limited to fringe areas of the park, see Exhibit 3. 4. Gravel or dirt is not a suitable or sustainable surface for road bikes.	None.
	<i>2. The maintenance road will bring traffic further into the park.</i>	1. The gated maintenance road/bike trail would only be open to hikers, bicycles, park operation/ranger vehicles, and emergency vehicles.	None.
	<i>3. The ski trails would need to cross the new paved bike trail multiple times.</i>	1. This concern was raised by a member of the Nordic Ski Club at the 9/26/23 PIM. Staff visited the park to review the proposed crossing location and it was determined an alternate bike path alignment could be proposed that would only cross one ski trail in a shaded, level wooded area. 2. The bike path maintenance road will not be plowed in the winter.	1. The draft master plan will be amended to reflect the revised alignment of the bike path/maintenance road.

TRAILS			
	1. <i>The plan to omit the steep trail in the center of the park will prevent skiers from accessing the ridge trail.</i>	1. The entire ridge trail will still be accessible from the orange loop steep hill on the north side of the hill. 2. Grooming equipment cannot traverse the steep slope of the blue segment proposed to be omitted.	None.
	2. <i>Ski trails must be in the woods to hold snow, so why is the trail system being displaced by a road?</i>	1. The trail system is not being displaced; one segment of the purple loop is proposed to be relocated to the south in a heavily wooded area.	None.
	3. <i>The proposed management plan recommends accessibility improvements but eliminates ski trails. (Isthmus)</i>	1. Ski trails are proposed to be relocated, not eliminated, there is no net loss of trail mileage. 2. The master plan recommends approximately 1 mile of new cross country ski trails.	None.
DOG PARK & LAKE ACCESS AREA			
Interior Fence	1. <i>Can access be allowed around the entire lake for those not using the dog park?</i>		1. The dog park fence will be shown offset from the western lake shoreline to allow continuous hiking around the lake without entering the dog park. 2. A second proposed hiking trail bridge is proposed over Halfway Prairie Creek to separate users.
Swimming Beach	2. <i>Is there really a need for a beach for dogs?</i>	1. Comments/concerns were heard about people who let their dogs swim at the boat landing. 2. The proposed dog beach location is at a flat area that can provide sustainable ingress/egress by dogs.	None.
Entrance and Parking Facilities	3. <i>The entrance off of Highway 19 is unsafe.</i>	1. WisDOT will be lowering STH 19 and paving the park entrance apron as part of their reconstruction project. 2. Dane County Parks proposes realigning the driveway to a more perpendicular intersection with STH 19. 3. The dog park parking lot is proposed to be expanded to the west to reduce congestion.	1. Changes 1-2 are beyond the level of detail of the master plan and will be incorporated into the future parking lot civil/site design process.

GENERAL COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

	<p>1. <i>The public input has been "we like the park as is and there are no needed improvements", or "preserve the park as is." Related comments: -The draft plan does the opposite of what people want. -Sledders and boy scouts shouldn't ruin the woods for a few days out of the year by building a paved road when hundreds of people use the park the rest of the time and want woods and remoteness as is.</i></p>	<p>1. Use of all Dane County parks continues to increase rapidly, one of the main purposes of the master plan is to identify where public access and facilities should occur in the future when needed to have the least impacts to the park. 2. There are no new park programming or land management changes proposed in the plan. 3. The only recreation changes proposed in the master plan are additional trails which is consistent with public input gathered. 4. The group camp access improvements and bike path/maintenance road are also proposed to provide more inclusive trail access to the interior wooded and recently purchased 300-acre addition south of the existing park.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>2. <i>If more parking is necessary, it could be located along the park entrance road between STH 19 and the existing lot.</i></p>	<p>1. This would require people to park considerably further from main park facilities and encourage/require them to walk on the entrance road with vehicle traffic into the park in the winter</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>3. <i>Is a second shelter/parking area needed? It will bring more people and detract from the park.</i></p>	<p>1. Use of all Dane County parks continues to increase rapidly, one of the main purposes of the master plan is to identify where public access and facilities should occur in the future when needed that would have the least impacts to the park.</p>	<p>None.</p>
	<p>4. <i>Concerns related to lights/dark skies.</i></p>	<p>1. Dane County Parks supports dark skies and utilizes low distribution fixtures in shelters with timers and does not light parking lots or roads that have no night time use.</p>	<p>None.</p>

Exhibit 1: Group Camp Road Alignment Alternatives Analysis

Group Camp Access Road Comparison

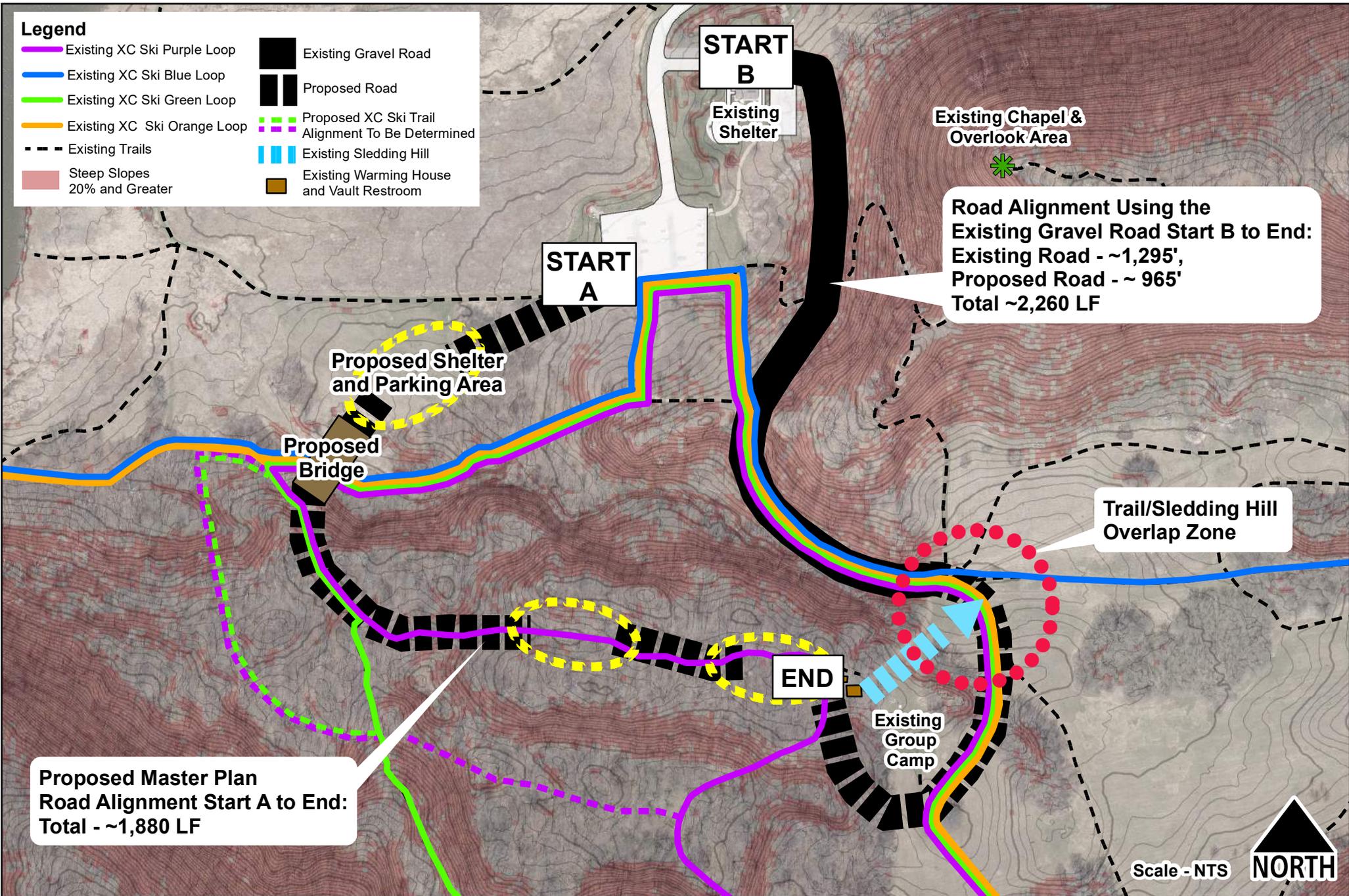


Exhibit 2: Proposed Access Improvements

Proposed Group Camp Road and Bike Trail Location





December 2023

Exhibit 3: Existing and Proposed Improved Access Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Master Plan

Legend

- Existing Public Vehicle Access
- Proposed Road to Group Camp
- Proposed Parking Areas
- Proposed Paved Trail/Maintenance Access

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