

Dane County Park Commission 2024 Annual Report

Thank You,

We are fortunate to have such an outstanding County Parks and public lands and waters in Dane County. Many partners have helped make this happen.

2025 is the 90th Anniversary of Dane County Parks – and that is certainly worth celebrating! The first park was Stewart Lake County Park, in Mount Horeb. The Commission will be holding our July 9th meeting at Stewart Lake County Park and the Foundation for Dane County Parks will be holding a big event to commemorate 90 years at Lussier Heritage Center at noon on October 9th.

About the Park Commission:

The Dane County Park Commission operates under both Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 1.91 and NR 52 and Dane County Ordinance Chapter 53. The Park Commission is not a standing committee, so it does not have direct legislative or budgetary authority. Its advisory role assists with shaping decisions related to Dane County Parks, such as:

- 1. Advising on the 5-year Park and Open Space Plan. The plan sets the strategic goals for land acquisition, future development projects, recreational programming, and environmental preservation in Dane County Parks.**
- 2. The commission sets the annual fees for various park activities, including camping, shelter rentals, permits, and education program fees.**
- 3. The commission is the primary advisory body on land acquisition for the park system.**
- 4. The commission reviews and makes recommendations for the distribution of Conservation Fund Grants, which support nonprofit organizations and local units of government in acquiring land or property interests.**
- 5. The commission approves the annual distribution request from the Madison Community Foundation Friends of Dane County Parks Endowment Fund.**
- 6. The commission advises on policies related to environmental protection, park use and park development.**

Parks Dept and Commission are in the process of updating Commission Handbook on policy and procedures which you and the County Board have final say. Hope to have this done sometime late this f

2024 Stats:

- Thanks to the County's commitment to land acquisition, Dane County Parks became the largest county park system in the state of Wisconsin in 2024
- The system has over 200 facilities, including park shelters, vault and plumbed restrooms, storage sheds, campgrounds, and the Heritage Center
- Estimate over 5 million visitors
- 21,276 annual permits & 13,804 daily permits sold
- More than 2,500 volunteers dedicated over 55,300 hours (34+ FTE)
- 20 Friends groups and partner organizations
- 260 educational programs held with 6,400 participants
- Forestry team planted over 1,000 trees
- Prescribed burns conducted on over 1,300 acres
- Collected 3,100 pounds of seed from 180 native species with an estimated worth of over one million dollars

2024 Project Highlights:

- Dane County Parks completed Phase 2 of the Lower Yahara River Trail. The trail begins at Fish Camp County Park and ends at Lake Kegonsa State Park.
- Accessible fishing and boating improvements were added at Fish Camp County.
- New West Waubesa Trail connects the Lower Yahara River Trail to the Waubesa Beach neighborhood in the Town of Dunn.
- The Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Master Plan was adopted.

I know you got an update last fall on the Parks and Open Space Plan, There will be a public Open House on the Plan April 30 at Lussier Heritage Center and after further review approval by you and the County Board this summer.

Also to be aware, myself and the Parks Department are reaching out to the Ho-Chunk Nation to strengthen our Cultural understanding and look at Ho-Chinch traditional names if possible. Bill Quackenbush may be retiring soon and we want to keep the relationship strong.

Questions?

Thank you.