



Parks & Open Space Plan Update 2025-2030

March 12, 2025 – Park Commission




Dane County Parks Planning and Development Team



Alex DeSmidt
Interim Park Planning Manager



Lindsay Koehnke
Landscape Architect



Dan Schmitt
Landscape Architect




Joleen Stinson
Parks Director



Jeff Prey
LTE Park Planner


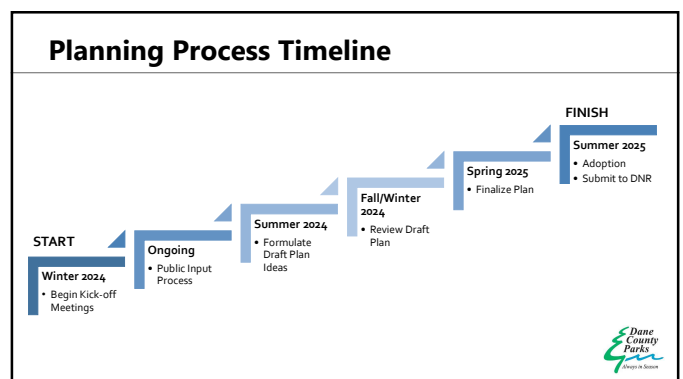
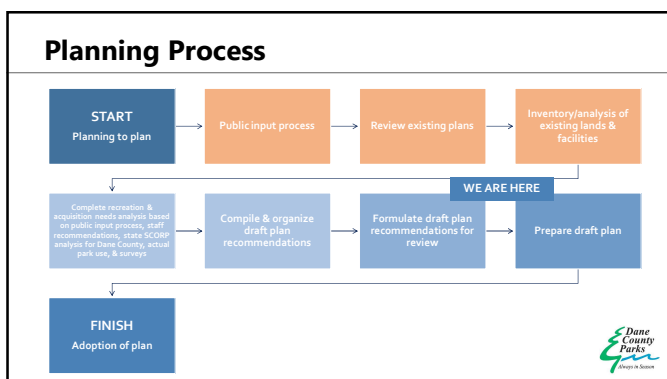
Meeting Overview

- Planning Process Overview
- Remaining Project Timeline
- Parks and Open Space Plan Overview
- Draft 2025-30 Parks and Open Space Plan Recommendation Overview



2025-2030 *Draft* Parks & Open Space Plan Planning Process Overview

- January/April 2024 - Webpage & Kickoff Meetings
- February/May 2024 - Online Survey
- Land & Facility Inventory Updates
- Updated Planning Considerations
- Summarized Public Comments & Survey Results
- Prepared Draft Plan Recommendations
- Prepare Draft POSP Report**
- Draft POSP Report Review
- Notices to All Local Units of Government
- Notices to Stakeholders/NPCO/Constant Contact
- Public Information Openhouse to Review Draft Plan Report
- Revisions as Necessary
- Adoption of Plan by Park Commission/EANR/County Board
- Submit to DNR

Remaining Schedule

March

- PC Update 3/12
- Finalize Draft POSP Report for Review
- Post Online
- Notices to All Local Units of Government
- Notices to Stakeholders/NPCO/Constant Contact

April

- Public Information Openhouse to Review Draft Plan Report 4/30

May

- Revisions as Necessary

June

- Introduce Resolution
- Adoption of Plan by Park Commission/EANR/County Board
- Submit to DNR



Dane County Parks Overview

Dane County Parks welcomes 5 million visitors annually and manages over 18,000 acres of land, largest county park system in Wisconsin!

- 25 Recreation Parks (8 Dog Parks, 2 Disc Golf Courses, 4 Lake Access)
- 20 Wildlife Areas
- 14 Natural Resource Areas
- 4 Historical or Cultural Sites
- 2 Forests
- Over 100 miles of trails (bike, equestrian, & cross-country ski)
- Over 3,000 acres of conservation & streambank easements
- 5 campgrounds & multiple adult & youth group camp sites
- Lussier Family Heritage Center



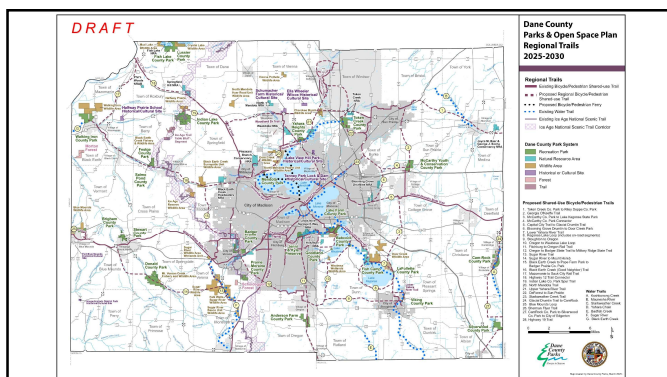
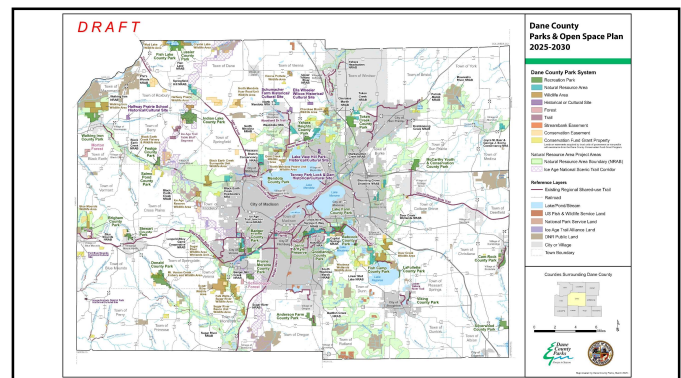
2025-2030 Draft POSP Dedication

Dedicated to:

All past and future generations of Dane County

This plan is to be implemented on land now known and recognized as Dane County, Wisconsin.

We acknowledge that this land is at the same time the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary land of the Ho-Chunk, Sauk and Kickapoo nations.



Purpose of the Parks and Open Space Plan

- Provides Countywide Common Vision for Park, Trail, Recreation, Policy, Program and Resource Protection Initiatives
- Identifies Countywide Needs for Park, Trail, Recreation & Resource Protection
- Identifies Where DCP May Acquire Land or Develop Park Facilities
- Provides a 'check-in' opportunity to interact with Partners/ Public/Stakeholders
- Stewardship grant eligibility - Must be updated every 5 years



What the Plan is NOT...

- A Land Use Plan or Zoning tool (Unless a local unit of government chooses to adopt it)
- Annual Planning & Development Work Plan
- A trail or park development plan
- Operation & Management Plan
- Prioritized



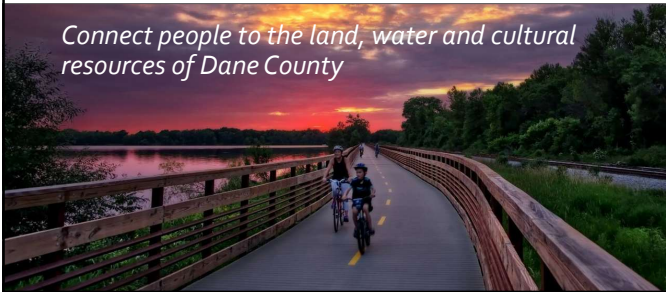
2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Major Plan Components

- 1 – Vision Statement & Goals
- 2 – Accomplishments
- 3 – Benefits of Parks/Large Scale 5 Year Planning Issues
(Economic & Health Benefits of Parks, Equity & Inclusion & Accessibility)
- 4 – Park Classification System
- 5 – Existing Land & Facility Inventory
- 6 – Planning Considerations
(Survey, Recreation Needs Analysis, Demographics)
- 7 – Plan Recommendations



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Vision Statement & Goals

Connect people to the land, water and cultural resources of Dane County



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Accomplishments

Trails & Bridges

- Anderson Farm Park Trail – Completed 0.75 miles of paved trail with wayfinding signage
- Brigham Trail – Asphalt Trail Restoration
- Capital City Trail – Resurfaced 10-miles of paved trail and improved drainage issues, wayfinding & ELM signs
- Lower Yahara River Trail - Completed 1.6 miles of trail from Fish Camp to Lake Kegonsa State Park
- North Mendota Trail – Completed 2.70 miles from North Mendota Prairie Unit Wildlife Area through Governor Nelson State Park to Yahara Heights/Cherokee Marsh NRA
- Token Creek County Park – Replaced 0.25 miles of Boardwalk
- Walking Iron County Park – Hiking Bridge Installed
- West Waubesa Trail – Completed 1.00 mile of paved trail at Capital Springs State Park/WGL Lake Farm County Park
- Snowmobile State Corridor Trail #21 – 7 Bridges Replaced
- Snowmobile State Corridor Trail #36 – 1 Snowmobile Bridges Replaced
- Snowmobile State Corridor Trail #38 – 2 Snowmobile Bridges Replaced
- Snowmobile County Funded Trail #53 – 1 Snowmobile Bridge Replaced
- Snowmobile Club Trail #33 – Bridge Installed at McCarthy Park



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Accomplishments

Parks & Recreation

- Anderson County Park – New Dog Park
- CamRock County Park
 - Added a Natural Playground (Shelter 2),
 - New Trailhead Parking Lot (Water Street)
- Festge County Park – Overlook Restoration Completed
- Fish Lake County Park – Park Redevelopment
- Fish Lake County Park – New Parking Lot
- Goodland County Park – Basketball Court Restoration
- McCarthy County Park – New Playground
- Riley-Deppe transferred to the Village of Marshall
- Salmo Pond – Parking Lot and Restroom Redevelopment
- Token Creek County Park – Roadway Pavement Restoration
- Disc Golf Baskets Replaced
- Systemwide – Replaced Permit Collection Tubes with Solar Credit Card Pavystations



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Accomplishments

Shelters & Restrooms

- Anderson County Park – Vault Toilet
- Badger Prairie County Park – Vault Toilet
- Goodland County Park – 2 Shelter Roof Replacements
- McCarthy County Park - Timber Frame Shelter
- Prairie Moraine County Park – Vault Toilet
- Token Creek County Park – 4 Shelter Roof Replacements
- William G. Lunney Lake Farm County Park
 - Campground Showerhouse Improvements
 - 2 Solar Shelters
 - 3 Shelter Roof Replacements



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Accomplishments

Community Gardens

- Anderson Farm County Park – New gardens, well and irrigation
- Silverwood County Park - Expanded gardens, well and irrigation
- Door Creek Wildlife Area – Acquired existing Market Garden

Water Access/Fishing

- Black Earth Creek – Canoe Access Improvements
- Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area
 - New Canoe/Kayak Landing on Yahara River
- Fish Camp County Park
 - Accessible Canoe/Kayak Improvements & Fishing Pier
- Lussier County Park – New Boat Launch
- Mendota County Park – Lagoon Walkway Improvements
- Salmo Pond – Accessible Fishing Pier Replacement
- Sugar River Wildlife Area (Basco Unit) – New Canoe/Kayak Landing and Parking Lot



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Accomplishments

Park Planning

- Indian Lake County Park - Completed Master Plan

Restorations

- Anderson Farm County Park – Forest Restoration
- Black Earth Creek Headwaters – Wetland Restoration
- Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area – Wetland Mitigation Bank
- Door Creek Wildlife Area – Stream Restoration
- Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area – Wetland Restoration
- Fish Camp County Park – Wet Meadow Restoration
- Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area – Prairie Restoration
- Indian Lake County Park – Forest Restoration
- Morton Forest – Forest Restoration
- Walking Iron County Park - Black Earth Creek Restoration
- Walking Iron Wildlife Area – Wetland Restoration



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Accomplishments

Wildlife Areas/Hunting

- Added 5 new Wildlife Areas with over 1,400 acres lands open to public hunting.
- Added over 1,200 acres and 30 permits to the Limited Archery Program for a total of 6,322 acres and 213 permits.
- Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area - New Parking Lots
- Door Creek Wildlife Area – Expansion and New Parking Lot

Land Acquisition

- 20 Dane County Conservation Fund Grants (1,120 acres)



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Economic Benefits of Parks

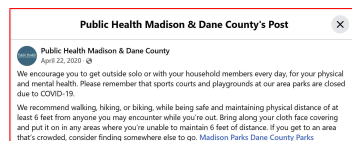
Parks & Recreation provide significant economic benefits to Dane County through:

- **Recreation Service Industry Sales**
(Bicycling, Fishing, Disc Golf)
- **Local Sports Events**
(Reddan Soccer Park, Cyclocross, Mountain Bike Events)
- **National and/or Regional Events – Support Facilities**
(Horse Fair, UW Badger Games, Ironman, Crossfit)



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Health Benefits of Parks

- Parks & Recreation provide significant economic positive health benefits to Dane County
- Time spent in nature has a multitude of mental and physical health benefits.



"We know that spending time in nature has significant physical and mental health benefits for everyone."

- Dr. Mark Thompson
President of Medical Groups
for SSM Health WI



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility

- Dane County Parks is dedicated to providing an inclusive parks system for all Dane County residents, regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, or ability.
- In 2021, the Dane County Board of Supervisors contracted with Keen Independent Research to conduct an independent evaluation of equity and access at Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo.
- In 2022, LWRD updated the Equity and Inclusion Plan (PDF) and submitted it to the Dane County Office of Equity and Inclusion.



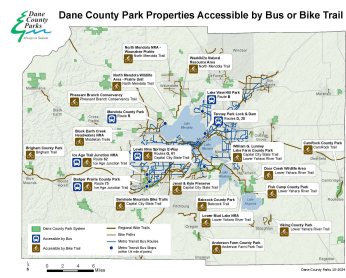
2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility – Recommendations

- Continue to implement recommendations of the LWRD Equity and Inclusion Plan
- Cultural Interpretation Signs
- Naming Conventions
- Meet/Exceed ADA
- Accessible Recreation Options
- Public Transportation Routes

Dane County Park	
Monthly, Equity and Inclusion Best Practice	
Community input features on website	
Cultural and historical markers and education tools	
Cultural programming and events	
DEI and intercultural competence staff training	
Early intervention for large-scale events	
External complaint procedure	
Familiarize community with outdoors before visiting the park	
Gender inclusive restrooms	
Inclusive design and artwork	
Increased public transportation options	
Joint events with community organizations	
Multi-language paper and digital marketing materials	
Multi-language signs at park entrance	
Multi-language translation function on website	
Partnerships with local non-profits, schools and libraries	
Programming and events for families	
Public transportation options on website	
Social media promoted efforts (DE efforts)	
Scholarships available for children's programs and camps	
Youth leadership opportunities for underserved groups	



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Equity, Inclusion, & Accessibility – Recommendations



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Park Classification System

Dane County Parks developed a Park Classification in 2000 to provide the public a better understanding of how lands were being managed.

- Recreation Parks
- Natural Resource Areas
- Forests
- Cultural/Historical Sites
- Wildlife Areas
- Trails (Includes Shared Use and Ice Age Trail)



Park System Inventory Summary

2025 Park System Acres:

Recreation Parks (25) 6,329 (+762)
Wildlife Areas (21) 4,796 (+2,478)
Natural Resource Areas (27) 3,501
Trail Properties & Easements (29) 345
Forests (2) 252
Historical/Cultural Sites (6) 234
Total Acres 15,457

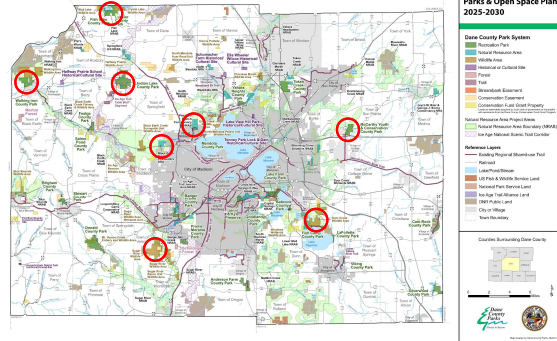
+Streambank Easements (42) 173
+Conservation Easements (42) 3,334
+Conservation Fund Grants to other local communities & Non-Profit Conservation Organizations (65) 3,815
Total Protected Acres 22,779

2018 Park System Acres:

Recreation Parks (26) 5,567
Wildlife Areas (16) 3,318
Natural Resource Areas (27) 2,976
Ice Age Trail Corridor 401
Forests (2) 187
Historical/Cultural Sites (6) 159
Total Acres 12,608



DRAFT



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Primary Planning Considerations

- 1- POSP Survey
- 2-Public Input
- 3-Demographics
- 4-Recreation Needs Analysis



NEW Dynamic Planning Considerations

- Regional trail project priorities
- Improving accessibility and inclusivity
- LWRD/Parks stream and wetland restoration projects
- Measuring carbon sequestration for restoration projects
- Renewable and green energy
- Climate change impacts on parks & recreation
- Cultural resource preservation practices and policies
- Pandemic impacts on parks & recreation
- How do we sustain maintenance for an expanding system
- Expanding outdoor education and strategic engagement



Public Input Summary

- Held 3 Public Information Meetings
 - January 17th, 2024 in Mazomanie
 - April 3rd, 2024 in Madison
 - April 15th, 2024 in Windsor

- Online Survey Open from January 29, 2024 to May 1, 2024
 - English & Spanish Versions offered
 - 1,958 responses received
 - Summary posted online

- Online Comment Form and Emails
- Local Units of Government (LUGS) & Stakeholder Groups, & Annual Friends Meetings
- Park Commission Updates

Overall previous Vision and Goals and majority of recommendations are still valid



Friends Groups, Partner Organizations & Stakeholders

Anderson Park Friends	Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited	Ho-Chunk Nation
Friends of Badger Mill Creek Environmental Corridor	Ducks Unlimited	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
Friends of Camrock Park	Foundation for Dane County Parks	National Park Service
Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA)	Groundswell Conservancy	United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Friends of Cherokee Marsh	Gateway to the Driftless	Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)
Friends of Donald Park	Gathering Waters	Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change
Friends of Festig Park	Natural Resource Foundation	Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC)
Friends of Indian Lake	Madison Community Foundation	All Cities, Villages and Towns in Dane County
Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society (FOLKS)	Wisconsin Bike Fed	
Friends of Lake View Hill Park	Wisconsin State Horse Council	
Friends of McCarthy Park	Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs	
Friends of Old Halfway Prairie School	Dane County Conservation League	
Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy (FOFBC)	Sierra Club Wisconsin Chapter	
Prairie Moraine Friends	Madison Nordic Ski Club (MadNorSki)	
Friends of Schumacher Farm	Wisconsin Fishing Expo	
Friends of Silverwood Park (FoSP)	National Wildlife Federation	
Friends of Stewart Park	Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance	
Friends of Wisdom Prairie (Holy Wisdom Monastery)	Capital Water Trails	
Capital Off Road Pathfinders (CORP)	Wisconsin Historical Society	
Operation Fresh Start	Driftless Conservancy	
Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA)	Prairie Enthusiasts	
Badger Prairie Community Garden	Access Ability Wisconsin (AAW)	
Rooted		



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview Draft Recommendations

Draft Plan Recommendations Are Based On:

- Public/Staff/Stakeholder Input
- POSP Survey(s)
- National, State & Local Park & Recreation Trends
- County Demographics (Population Trends)
- Dane County Parks Recreation Use
- Resource Protection Needs



Recreation Trend Summary

- Outdoor recreation participation increased dramatically both nationally and locally during the pandemic
- Post pandemic participation rate of increase is moderating but appears to be maintaining higher levels than pre-pandemic
- Running, walking, hiking, biking, and fishing were the top 5 most popular national recreation activities
- Dog exercise areas, biking, hiking, fishing, boating, camping, outdoor education, and disc golf continue to be popular activities in Dane County Parks



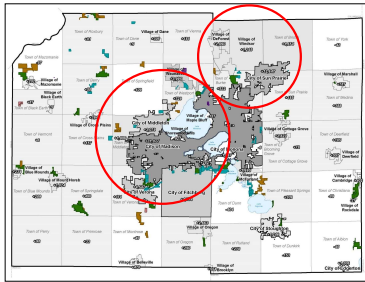
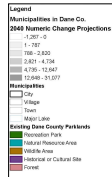
Demographics Summary

- Dane County's population is the second highest in the state and is estimated to continue to be the fastest growing county in the state
- Dane County's 65 and older population is estimated to continue to be the fastest growing age range
- Dane County has one of the most diverse populations in the state



Dane County 2040 Numeric Population Projections

Based on the 2017 population growth estimates and the projections for future growth by 2040, the most growth is expected in the center and the north east quadrant of the County.



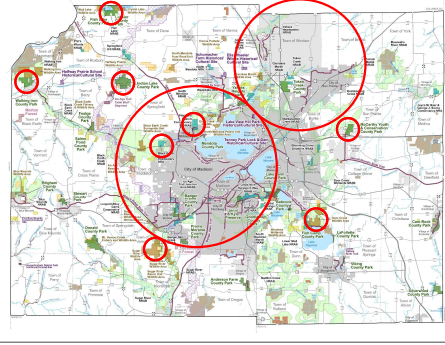
2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview New Recommendations – Recreation Parks

General Recommendations

- Maintain recommendation for a new Recreation Park in the NE Quadrant
- Maintain recommendations for new dog parks around Mt. Horeb, Cottage Grove and Cambridge areas
- Maintain recommendation to continue to investigate suitable locations for mountain bike trails
- Maintain recommendation for new disc golf course in western Dane County

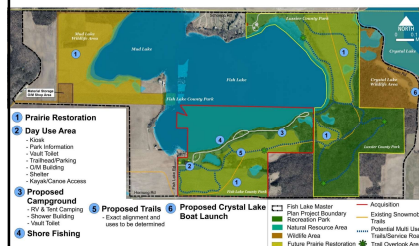


DRAFT



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview New Recommendations – Recreation Parks

Rename Lussier to Fish Lake County Park



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview New Recommendations – Recreation Parks

Master Plan Needs

- Prepare a master plan to further investigate how recreation and stewardship activities at these parks can be improved and enhanced.

Stewart Lake County Park & Walking Iron (Rec Park/WA)



2025-2030 Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview New Recommendations – Natural Resource Areas

NEW – North Mendota NRA Properties

- Wilke Prairie Preserve
- Waunakee Prairie

Low-impact, nature based recreation development allowed such as mowed grass trails

Continue to balance increased public use with resource protection



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* New Program Area - Engagement & Visitor Services

The Engagement and Visitor Services Program was created to bring together the education, outreach, engagement, marketing, volunteer program, park enforcement, general visitor services, and the Lussier Family Heritage Center. Engagement and Visitor Services focuses on providing safe, welcoming parks and programs.

Priorities:

1. Provide outstanding customer service.
2. Provide for the safe enjoyment of all county park lands and trails, including visitor education through public contact, enforcement and information programs.
3. Provide park users with safe, clean, and well-maintained facilities and park areas.
4. Provide high quality environmental and outdoor education programs.



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Lussier Family Heritage Center

Hub for education and outreach programming for Land and Water Resources Department.

Host numerous environmental and outdoor education programs including:

- summer camp
- Get Outside!
- school field trips
- public events
- native plant workshops
- volunteer trainings
- and more



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* New Program Area – Natural Resource Management

The Natural Resource Program Area merged land restoration and forestry teams. These teams have grown significantly in staff size and impact over the last several years. Forestry and restoration work are important parts of implementing Dane County's Climate Action Plan.

Priorities:

1. Maintain and enhance county parkland natural areas through invasive species control, native seeding/planting, and prescribed fire.
2. Maintain and enhance county parkland tree canopy through regular tree pruning, planting and caring for young trees, storm damage and hazard tree response, and tree disease and pest control.
3. Work with the Real Estate Coordinator and LWRD Divisions to convert agricultural fields on parkland to permanent cover.
4. Apply for grants to support forestry and land restoration projects.
5. Incorporate volunteers in land restoration and forestry as safe and appropriate.



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* LWRD - Watersheds & Ecosystem Services Division

Protect & Improve Surface Water Quality

- Adaptive Management & Water Quality Trading
- Community Manure Management
- Conservation Funding Opportunities
- Legacy Sediment Removal
- Urban Water Quality Grant Program
- Yahara CLEAN

Build Community Flood Resilience

- Lake Management
- Stream Restoration & Protection
- Wetland Restoration & Protection
- Yahara River Sediment Removal

Increase Carbon Sequestration

- Continuous Cover Program
- Land Acquisition and Protection
- Restoration and Land Management
- Soil Carbon Monitoring



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* LWRD - Lake Management Division

Programs: Lake Levels (Locks), Navigation (Buoys), Clean Beaches, Aquatic Invasives Species, & Aquatic Plant Management

-Babcock, Fish Camp, Goodland, Lake Farm, Lower Mud Lake NRA, Mendota, etc.

Projects: Yahara River & Legacy Sediment Removal Dewatering Basin Restorations

-Babcock County Park, Waakikizu NRA, Lower Mud Lake NRA



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* LWRD – Land Conservation Division

Conservation Compliance

Agricultural performance standards, plans, and permits.

Services

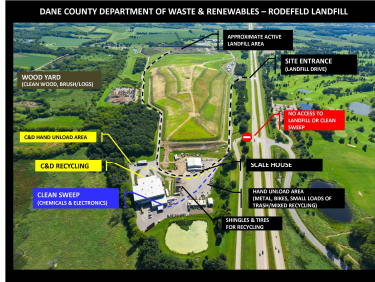
Project planning, design, surveying, or construction assistance.

Conservation Initiatives

Department initiatives that support agricultural conservation.



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* NEW Partner Projects - Rodefeld Landfill



Collaborate with Dane County Waste & Renewables, City of Madison Parks Division, surrounding communities, and recreational organizations to develop a plan for conversion of the existing Rodefeld landfill to recreational space and to incorporate new recreation opportunities at the proposed new landfill site before, during, and after landfilling.



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Climate Initiatives

Coordinate with LWRD and the Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change to implement science-based strategies identified in the [Dane County Climate Action Plan](#).

The plan and other initiatives work towards the creation of a **climate-resilient and zero-carbon world** through the following goals:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Address climate change impacts
- Cut countywide emissions in half by 2030, putting Dane County on a path to carbon neutrality by 2050



2025-2030 *Draft Parks & Open Space Plan Overview* Cultural Resource Preservation

- Continue to coordinate with the Ho-Chunk Nation on mound markers, interpretative signs & management
- Continue to coordinate cultural resource review into planning for all projects on Dane County Parkland
- Continue efforts for preservation in place



THANK YOU

Courtesy:Shan Barlas



Contact Information

Alex DeSmidt
Interim Park Planning Manager

PHONE:
(608) 445-8665

EMAIL:
desmidt.alex@countyofdane.com

WEBSITE:
danecountyparks.com

Join us!

