

**OUTDOOR RECREATION  
AND  
OPEN SPACE PLAN  
FOR  
FOND DU LAC COUNTY  
2020-2024**



Taycheedah Creek Bridge, Peebles Trail

Fond du Lac County  
Planning & Parks Department  
February 2020

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**UW-EXTENSION EDUCATION, AGRICULTURE  
AND RECREATION COMMITTEE  
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## **Introduction**

This Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan for Fond du Lac County is an update of the 2015 plan. This plan will serve Fond du Lac County as a guide in recreation and park development and will enable the county to participate in State and Federal recreation grant programs, which require such a plan as a prerequisite.

Upon adoption by the Fond du Lac County Board of Supervisors, this revised recreation plan will continue in use as a guide in recreation and park planning and development, and will enable Fond du Lac County to maintain eligibility for Federal and State recreation grants. Attached at the end of the plan is a capital improvement plan for county parks and trails.

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## **SECTION 1: FOND DU LAC COUNTY**

### **GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF COUNTY**

#### **Geography**

Fond du Lac County is located in east central Wisconsin at the southern end of Lake Winnebago. The total land area of the county is 724 square miles or 463,360 acres. The county consists of 21 civil towns, 9 villages and 3 cities. Refer to Map 1 on the next page.

In 2010, 101,633 people lived in Fond du Lac County, according to the U.S. Census of Population. About two-thirds of the population lives in the cities and villages; the City of Fond du Lac alone contains over 43,000 people. The other third of the population is scattered throughout the 21 unincorporated towns, with some concentrations along Lake Winnebago and near the City of Fond du Lac in the Towns of Auburn, Empire, Fond du Lac, Friendship and Taycheedah.

Most growth in population will occur within cities and villages around the county. The majority of the county will retain much of its rural character. The towns of Auburn, Ashford, Empire, Fond du Lac, Friendship and Taycheedah will continue to urbanize.

#### ***Geology and Topography***

There are two main types of bedrock under Fond du Lac County: the older crystalline rock such as granite and the younger sedimentary rocks such as dolomite, sandstone and shale. In some places, this bedrock appears at the surface, as does the dolomite of the Niagara Escarpment and the sandstone and granite at the eastern edge of the county. In most parts of the county, unconsolidated overburden consisting of sand, gravel and clay covers the bedrock. The Pleistocene Glaciers last seen in Wisconsin about 10,000 years ago left this overburden. This overburden ranges in thickness from several feet to several hundred feet. In some places, this overburden is well sorted; for example, the several hundred feet of clay deposited by the glacial lakes or the sand and gravel found in kames and eskers.

As they advanced and withdrew, the various stages of the glacier left deposits, which in combination with the bedrock formation, form the major topographic feature of the County. Glacial moraines and other deposition features such as drumlins, kames and eskers form the hills and valleys of the eastern half of the County. The Niagara Escarpment forms the high ridge, which runs just east of Lake Winnebago and swings southwest past Oakfield. The low, flat area around Lake Winnebago was the bed of a large glacial lake. The gently rolling topography of the western part of the county is mostly ground moraine, and the ridges and outcrops near Ripon and Fairwater are bedrock controlled. Lake Winnebago and the Horicon Marsh are part of a long broad valley carved by a lobe of the glacier in the relatively soft shale bedrock previously found there.





## ***Watersheds***

According to the Soil Conservation Service, there are seventeen major watershed areas in Fond du Lac County, draining into ten river systems. Only one major river, the Fond du Lac River, is located completely within the County; the other rivers flow out of the County. View Map 2 on the preceding page for the locations of these watersheds.

**Table 1 Major Watersheds of Fond du Lac County**

| <b>Watershed</b>               | <b>Acreage</b> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Milwaukee River, West Branch   | 20,560         |
| Milwaukee River, Main Branch   | 53,500         |
| Milwaukee River, East Branch   | 10,280         |
| Milwaukee River, North Branch  | 411            |
| Sheboygan River                | 50,990         |
| Manitowoc River                | 18,500         |
| Mullet River                   | 12,336         |
| Grand River                    | 13,673         |
| Silver Creek                   | 31,663         |
| Rush Creek                     | 2,755          |
| Fox River                      | 8,779          |
| Fond du Lac River, East Branch | 75,700         |
| Fond du Lac River, West Branch | 63,593         |
| Upper Rock River               | 62,002         |
| Rock River, East Branch        | 9,889          |
| East Shore Lake Winnebago      | 12,028         |
| West Shore Lake Winnebago      | 23,233         |
| Total Acreage                  | 469,892        |

Source: Fond du Lac County Farmland Preservation Plan, 1980

The Manitowoc, Sheboygan and Milwaukee Rivers begin in the eastern part of the county and flow eastward to Lake Michigan. These three rivers and their tributaries drain just over a third of the county. The Fond du Lac River, flowing to Lake Winnebago, drains the central third of the county. The headwaters of the Rock River lie over a sub-continental divide in the southwestern part of the county, and drain southward into the Mississippi River.

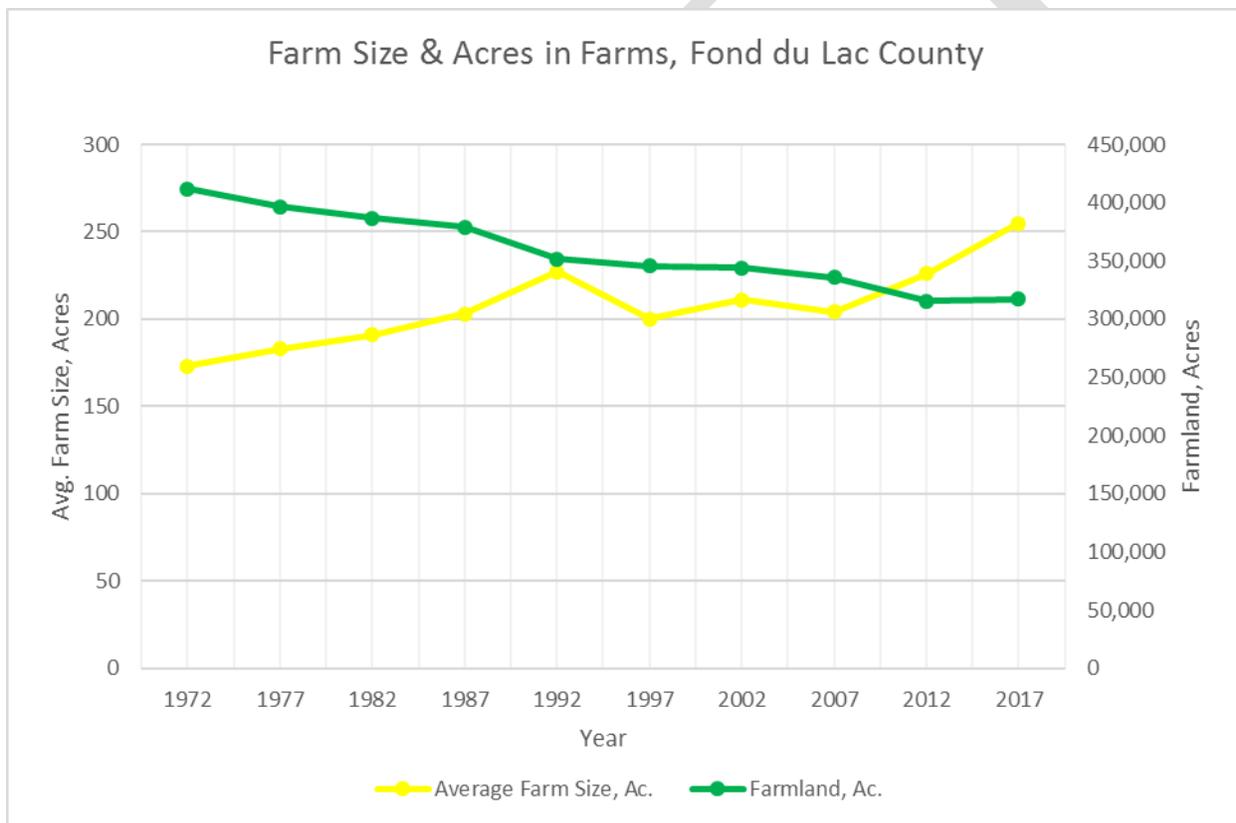
## ***Land Use and Agriculture***

Agriculture is the major land use in Fond du Lac County. Data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture show that approximately 68 percent of the total land area in the county (about 317,371 out of 463,360 acres) is in farms. This figure is down from 335,745 acres for about a 1,800-acre loss of farmland every year. All “land in farms” is not productive cropland, because

wetlands and woodlands that are owned by farmers are included in that acreage, but it is a revealing statistic.

According to the 1972 Census of Agriculture, about 89 percent of the land in Fond du Lac County was in farms. By 2017, land in farms dropped to 68 percent. The number of farms has declined by more nearly half between 1972 and 2017, from 2,380 farms to 1,244 farms. Some of these changes are due to differences in classifications between the years, but the decrease of land in farms is also attributable to urbanization, and the decrease in the number of farms is partially due to the increase in average farm size. The following chart graphs the trends of farm size and the number of farms in Fond du Lac County for the 1972 to 2017 period. Over the 45-year period, more than 147 square miles or the equivalent of about four townships worth of agricultural land was lost to development.

**Figure 1 Farmland in Acres & Average Farm Size, 1972-2017, Fond du Lac County**



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, USDA.

## Population

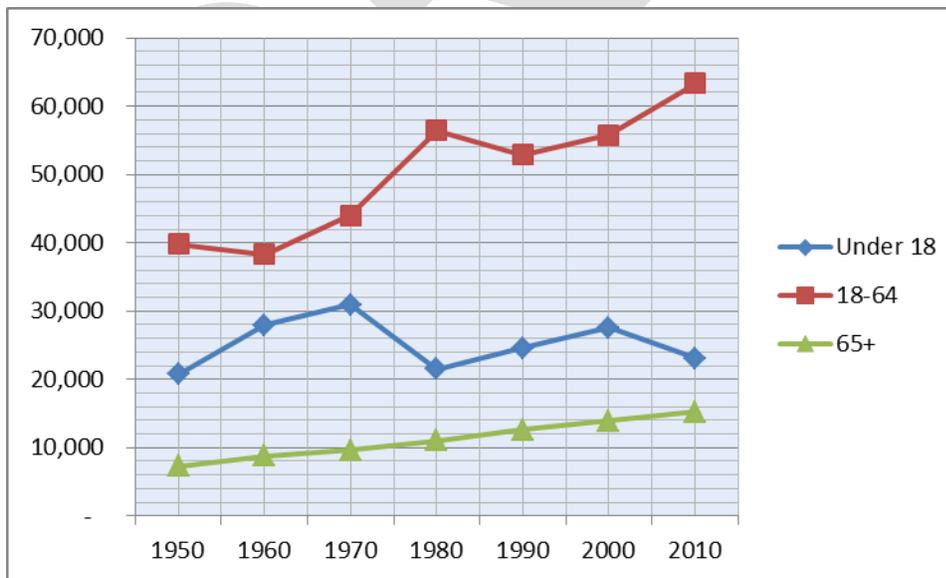
The 2010 U.S. Census population count for Fond du Lac County was 101,633. Decennial growth in population reached a peak in 1960 with a 12.2% increase. County population trends have generally been in line with state trends. Table 2 below illustrates population growth since 1950.

**Table 2 Population Growth, 1950-2010 Fond du Lac County**

| Year | County  | % Change | State     | % Change |
|------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1950 | 67,829  | 8.8%     | 3,434,575 | 9.5%     |
| 1960 | 76,085  | 12.2%    | 3,951,777 | 15.1%    |
| 1970 | 84,567  | 11.1%    | 4,417,821 | 11.8%    |
| 1980 | 88,964  | 5.2%     | 4,705,767 | 6.5%     |
| 1990 | 90,083  | 1.3%     | 4,891,769 | 4.0%     |
| 2000 | 97,296  | 8.0%     | 5,254,930 | 7.4%     |
| 2010 | 101,633 | 4.5%     | 5,686,986 | 8.2%     |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

**Figure 2 Population by Age Group, 1950-2010, Fond du Lac County**



Source: US Census, 1950-2010

Figure 2 illustrates the age trend of county residents. Figure 2 shows a gradual trend toward an aging population and a stable population of persons under age 18. As persons in the 19-64 age group grow older, there will likely be an increasing number of persons of retirement age in the county. Outdoor recreation opportunities for retirement age persons may need special consideration as the county plans for parks and open space in the coming decades.

Census figures for 2010 show the county population as 65% urban and 35% rural. Urban means all persons living in residences within incorporated cities and villages and within towns of 2,500 or more inhabitants. The 2010 census shows a large shift away from rural to urban areas within the county.

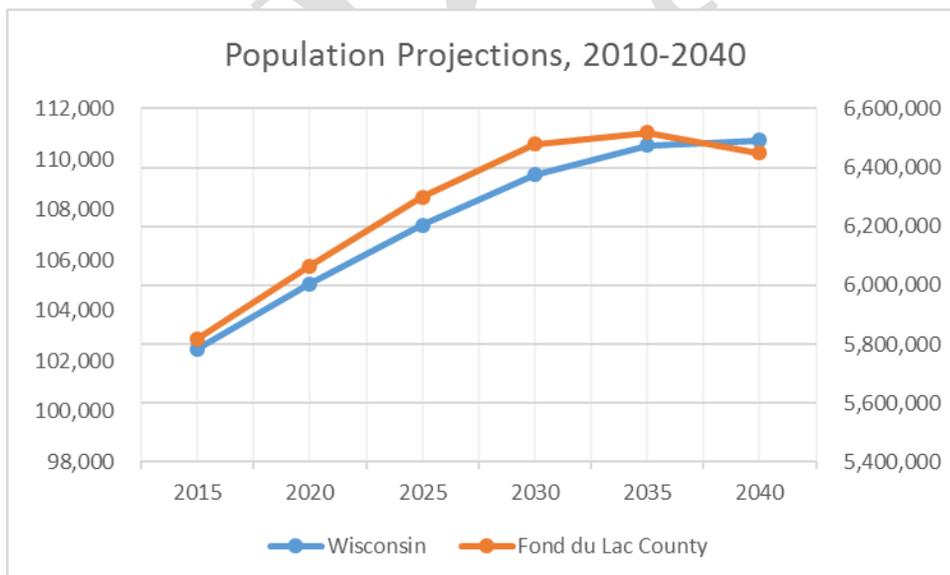
**Table 3 Population by Urban & Rural Residence, 1960-2010, Fond du Lac County**

| Year | Urban  | Rural  | Total   | % Urban | % Rural |
|------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1960 | 43,517 | 31,568 | 75,085  | 58%     | 42%     |
| 1970 | 48,319 | 36,248 | 84,567  | 57%     | 43%     |
| 1980 | 49,511 | 39,453 | 88,964  | 56%     | 44%     |
| 1990 | 58,397 | 31,685 | 90,082  | 65%     | 35%     |
| 2000 | 60,225 | 37,071 | 97,296  | 62%     | 38%     |
| 2010 | 65,930 | 35,703 | 101,633 | 65%     | 35%     |

Source: US Census, 1960-2010

Figure 3 below indicates a modest growth in population in the county through 2030 followed by a taper and decline in population by 2040.

**Figure 3 Population Projections, Wisconsin & Fond du Lac County**



Source: Department of Administration, State of Wisconsin. 2013.

## AVAILABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

Existing natural resources within Fond du Lac County provide a variety of recreational opportunities. These resources include lakes, streams, wetlands, woodlands and some rolling hills and escarpments. Much of the county is agricultural land, which provides open space and some wildlife habitat but little recreational opportunity to non-landowners.

### ***Lakes***

There are 48 lakes in Fond du Lac County, many of which have public access. Lake Winnebago is by far the largest of these lakes, and provides outstanding opportunities for fishing and water sports. Public access to Lake Winnebago is adequate, but not well developed outside of the City of Fond du Lac.

Other lakes include Rush, Long, Kettle Moraine, Wolf, and Mauthe. All have public access and are popular for recreational purposes. Of the major lakes in the county, only Lake De Neveu and Mullet Lake are not readily accessible to the public.

### ***Streams***

There are about 50 streams and rivers within Fond du Lac County, but most are small, slow and shallow. The longest sections of stream are the Milwaukee River, the Rock River and the Fond du Lac River.

Fishing is poor in most of the local streams, although some trout do exist at the headwaters of the East Branch of the Milwaukee River in the Kettle Moraine area, and in Parsons Creek before its confluence with the East Branch of the Fond du Lac River.

### ***Wetlands***

Wetlands, many of them associated with streams and lakes, are a valuable recreational and environmental resource in Fond du Lac County. According to the WDNR 2007 Wetland Inventory, there are approximately 70,000 acres of wetlands in the county. About 15% of the land area of the county is wetlands. Several publically owned, large wetland areas, described in the next section, are easily accessible. Most of the smaller wetland areas are located on private land and are not open to the public. Both large and small wetland areas do however, continue to function as assets to the environment in that they provide wildlife and waterfowl habitat, fish spawning areas, and help maintain surface water quality by filtering runoff.

### ***Woodlands***

Woodlands once covered between 40 and 80 percent of Fond du Lac County, and now make up between 10 and 30 percent of the land cover. Areas where woodlands still exist are areas of public ownership such as the Northern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest, or areas that have physical characteristics that make them poor farmland. Areas of high bedrock, some wet

soils, steep slopes and similar terrain that did not make good farmland remain in tree cover and now comprise a valuable asset to the environment.

Woodlands, even small ones on farms, are a valuable resource in this highly agricultural county. They provide wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion, help to cleanse the air, and provide recreational opportunities. Both the State and the County provide recreational facilities that are wooded and easily accessible to the public.

### ***Hills, Escarpments***

Much of the terrain of Fond du Lac County, particularly the central and western parts, is nearly flat to gently rolling. Only in the eastern part of Fond du Lac County, with its drumlin fields and the Niagara Escarpment, and in the Ripon area, are hills available for such winter sports as sledding and skiing. The only public sledding hills in Fond du Lac are man-made and are located at Buttermilk Park, the UW Fond du Lac Campus and Adelaide Park. No public downhill ski areas exist in the entire county.

The Niagara Escarpment, which curves through Fond du Lac County for about fifteen miles, is the most significant relief found in Fond du Lac County. The Oakfield Ledge State Natural Area and the Town of Taycheedah's Kiekhaefer Park are the only public lands that offer recreational opportunities on the Escarpment.

### **STATE RECREATION AREAS**

The State of Wisconsin owns some of the most significant recreational resources available in Fond du Lac County. These properties are a significant recreation resource for county residents and visitors.

#### ***Kettle Moraine State Forest***

Kettle Moraine State Forest, located in the southeastern part of Fond du Lac County, is a 10,582-acre portion of the 27,725-acre northern unit of Kettle Moraine State Forest.

Made up of geological formations caused by retreating glaciers, the DNR manages the forest for forestry and outdoor recreation. Textbook examples of glacial landforms are scattered throughout the forest, such as drumlins, kames, eskers and kettles. Botanically, the forest offers a lot of plant diversity with nearly sixty species of trees present, together with numerous shrubs, wild flowers, ferns and other plant life. There are nearly 40 mammal species ranging from the white-tailed deer to the small mammals. Birds are seen everywhere, especially during the spring and fall migrations. Some of the higher ridges and eskers provide excellent viewing areas.

The major recreational developments within the forest are located at Mauthe Lake south of New Prospect, and at Long Lake north of Dundee. Both have excellent camping and hiking facilities. Mauthe Lake offers electricity, trailer sites, tent camping, fireplaces, picnic tables, sanitary facilities and drinking water, while Long Lake offers all of the above except electricity.

Hiking, biking, equestrian, snowmobile and cross-country ski trails are available in several parts of the Kettle Moraine.

### ***Horicon National Wildlife Refuge***

Horicon Marsh lies in northern Dodge and southern Fond du Lac Counties, at the junction of the east and west branches of the Rock River.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages Horicon National Wildlife Refuge that is the north 1/3 of marsh. The Wisconsin DNR manages the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area that is the south 2/3 of marsh. Often referred to as the “Everglades of the North”, the 31,000-acre marsh is one of the best-known wetlands in the Midwest.

The marsh provides habitat for up to three hundred fifty varieties of birds including herons, egrets, and numerous songbirds. Deer and other small game animals are numerous. In the fall, hundreds of thousands of geese stop at the marsh while migrating south from Canada. Because of the geese, the marsh has become a major tourist attraction. Goose and duck hunters also frequent the area.

### ***Eldorado Marsh***

Eldorado Marsh is located five miles west of the City of Fond du Lac, and consists of over 6,000 acres of State-owned land. A trail runs through the center of the marsh, permitting the visitor to observe wildlife at close range. Deer, waterfowl, raccoons, muskrats, rabbits, songbirds and other wildlife are common. Sportsmen hunt deer, geese, ducks and pheasant, and hikers and wildlife observers frequently visit the marsh.

### ***Other State Land***

Several other State recreation areas also exist in Fond du Lac County, including parts of the Mullet Creek Wildlife Area and the Brandon Marsh. DNR staff manage these areas to provide waterfowl and wildlife habitat, and provide sportsmen with public hunting land. The Oakfield Ledge Natural Area provides a study area along the Niagara Escarpment. The Glacial Habitat Restoration Area covers the western nine townships of Fond du Lac County. The goal of this DNR program is to provide a variety of habitats for upland birds and wetland waterfowl, eventually including as many as 4,082 acres in these nine townships. Most of this land is open to public hunting and passive recreation.

### ***Ice Age Reserve***

Kettle Moraine State Forest is actually a unit of the Ice Age Reserve. The Reserve is also part of the Statewide Ice Age Trail System, which connects geologic points of interest created or exposed by glacial action. The Federal Ice Age Interpretive Center, located just south of Dundee in the Town of Osceola, contains educational displays regarding glacial action and landforms.

## **MUNICIPAL RECREATION FACILITIES**

As part of the inventory of available recreational facilities in Fond du Lac County, it is important to consider the many facilities provided by the individual municipalities. These municipalities provide most of the parks in Fond du Lac County, and the municipal parks fill an important role in the provision of active recreation areas such as baseball diamonds, tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools, and playgrounds. School facilities also provide important recreational opportunities.

There are 126 city, village and town parks or playgrounds available throughout Fond du Lac County totaling about 1,920 acres of land. Refer to Table 5 on the next page.

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**Table 4 Municipal Recreational Facilities (non-county)\***

|          | <b>Municipality</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Acreage</b> | <b>Facilities Available</b>             |
|----------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|---|
| Cities   | Fond du Lac         | 26            | 692            | Full range of facilities                |
|          | Ripon               | 15            | 106            | Full range of facilities                |
|          | Waupun              | 15            | 56             | Full range of facilities                |
|          | <b>Total</b>        | <b>56</b>     | <b>858</b>     |   |
| Villages | Brandon             | 3             | 46             | Standard                                |
|          | Campbellsport       | 7             | 117            | Standard                                |
|          | Eden                | 4             | 28             | Standard                                |
|          | Fairwater           | 2             | 9              | Baseball & playground                   |
|          | Mt. Calvary         | 2             | 7              | Standard                                |
|          | North Fond du Lac   | 5             | 36             | Standard & pool                         |
|          | Oakfield            | 4             | 72             | Standard                                |
|          | Rosendale           | 5             | 49             | Standard                                |
|          | St. Cloud           | 3             | 12             | Standard                                |
|          | <b>Total</b>        | <b>36</b>     | <b>379</b>     |   |
| Towns    | Alto                | 1             | 1              | Basketball, playground                  |
|          | Ashford             | 1             | 32             | Basketball, playground                  |
|          | Auburn              | 1             | 51             | Basketball, playground                  |
|          | Byron               | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Calumet             | 2             | 10             | Lake access, ball diamonds, shelter     |
|          | Eden                | 1             | 30             | Basketball, playground                  |
|          | Eldorado            | 2             | 6              | Baseball                                |
|          | Empire              | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Fond du Lac         | 1             | 35             | Open space, river access                |
|          | Forest              | 2             | 7              | Standard, trail                         |
|          | Friendship          | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Lamartine           | 1             | 4              | Baseball, picnic shelters (2)           |
|          | Marshfield          | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Metomen             | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Oakfield            | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Osceola             | 1             | 2              | Baseball                                |
|          | Ripon               | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Rosendale           | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Springvale          | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | Taycheedah          | 4             | 165            | Boat landing, open space, ball diamonds |
|          | Waupun              | 0             | 0              |   |
|          | <b>Total</b>        | <b>15</b>     | <b>355</b>     |   |
|          |                     | Cities        | 56             | 692                                     |
|          | Villages            | 36            | 379            |   |
|          | Towns               | 15            | 355            |   |
|          | <b>Grand Total</b>  | <b>77</b>     | <b>1,426</b>   |   |

\*Includes public and private school facilities and VFD parks.

“Standard” under the Facilities Available column above includes facilities like baseball, tennis, basketball, playgrounds and picnic areas.

## **COUNTY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Along with the State, local and school district recreational facilities available to the public, there are a number of county-owned and operated facilities. Fond du Lac County operates a public golf course; fairgrounds, thirteen county parks, six recreational trails and a 300-mile snowmobile trail system. All have benefited from considerable improvements beginning in the 1980's and through 2019. Table 6 below offers more details. Refer to Map 3 for the locations of these parks.

### ***Fairgrounds***

The County Fairgrounds is approximately 90 acres in size and is located in the City of Fond du Lac. Best known as the site of the annual county fair, the fairgrounds is a multiple-use recreational facility utilized on a year-round basis.

Seven major buildings are available for use at the fairgrounds, with over 66,000 sq. ft. of heated exhibition space available. The heavily utilized Exposition Building is the centerpiece of the fairgrounds. Other main buildings include the Exhibition Building and the Recreation Center. Four large barns of varying sizes are also available. A 50,000 square foot ice facility with two sheets of ice is available to the public on a limited basis. The ice facility was a joint effort between Blue Line, the City of Fond du Lac and the County.

Aside from the County Fair, the fairgrounds receives year-round for trade shows, auto shows, major company and church picnics, dances, horse shows, dog shows, equipment exhibitions, an ethnic festival and art fair, craft shows and rummage sales, and other events of almost every description.

The fairgrounds are also the site of a municipal water park operated by the City of Fond du Lac. A park is located adjacent to the water park at the north end of the fairgrounds, and includes playground and picnic equipment, and two picnic shelters. A ball diamond, grandstand, horse arena and horseshoe courts are located at the south end of the fairgrounds.

### ***Gottfried Prairie and Arboretum***

The Gottfried Prairie and Arboretum, located at the University of Wisconsin, Fond du Lac Campus is composed of 37.5 acres of native prairie, including 55 different kinds of native wildflowers and 6 species of native grasses. A 3.5-acre formal Arboretum contains 250 native trees and 140 native shrubs. Tree planting groupings represent native Wisconsin forest communities. The Arboretum also has an established interpretive trail with signage introducing visitors to the prairie community, as well as benches, picnic tables and a picnic kiosk. The Arboretum is open year-round, free of charge to the public.

The Arboretum has numerous functions including serving as an outdoor education facility and as an outdoor recreation facility. The Arboretum includes about 0.8 miles of walking trails that weave through the formal arboretum and the prairie areas. These trails connect to city sidewalks and surrounding neighborhoods. Opportunities exist to make additional trail connections between the formal arboretum and a trail through the prairie portion of the Arboretum as well as trail connections to the Fond du Lac High School and community soccer fields located on the west side of the UW-Fond du Lac Campus and to Moraine Park Technical College.

### ***Rolling Meadows Golf Course***

Located at the southwestern edge of the City of Fond du Lac, Rolling Meadows is a 27-hole championship golf course. Constructed in the early 70's, course improvements happened continuously. The county operates the course as an enterprise fund and the course averages 58,000 rounds of golf each season.

### ***Calvary Marsh***

Calvary Marsh is located in the northeastern part of the county on the Sheboygan River. The County Board designated the 250-acre property as a public hunting ground in the mid-1960s. The land is a mix of upland hardwood forests and open wetlands. Access is primarily by small boat on the Sheboygan River. A walking easement beginning at CTH CCC along the north bank of the river provides overland access. The county completed a selective hardwood harvest in the early 2000s to promote continued growth of native hardwoods covering about 40 acres of the property. The property offers hunting and nature observation opportunities. The Marsh remains undeveloped.

### ***Columbia Park***

Columbia Park is a 19-acre county park located on Lake Winnebago about ten miles northeast of Fond du Lac. The park contains a modern 40-unit campground with electrical hookups and restrooms, boat and RV sanitary dump stations, a fish cleaning station, a playground, a basketball court, one enclosed and one open-air picnic shelter, and picnic facilities.

Columbia Park is best known for its boating facilities. A 4-slip marina is available for annual rentals, along with overnight docking for another 40-50 boats on 900 feet of harbor wall. Six boat launches and parking for 100 cars and trailers are available. A 70-foot observation tower and navigation beacon marks the harbor entrance.

### ***Hobbs Woods Nature Area***

Located about three miles south of Fond du Lac, Hobbs Woods is a 60-acre county park devoted to hiking and nature study. Most of the park is thickly wooded, but several acres of prairie, planted in 1979-80, are coming along well. Parsons Creek carves a large ravine through the park, and harbors some naturally reproducing brook trout. About three miles of nature trails, which are keyed to a self-guiding brochure, wind through the park.

The park is popular for hiking in the spring, summer and fall and for cross-country skiing during the winter. Recent improvements at Hobbs Woods include an enlargement of the parking lot, and a great deal of work by the former Wisconsin Conservation Corps and parks crews to enhance trout habitat and reduce stream bank erosion in Parsons Creek. Other work has included removal of deadfalls or dead trees, which threaten to fall on trails or restrict the flow of the creek.

### ***Highway 45 Wayside Park***

Highway 45 Wayside Park is approximately eight acres in size, and is located on the west shore of Lake Winnebago about three miles north of Fond du Lac. Facilities at the park include parking, toilets, and a picnic shelter, grills and tables and a 4-lane launch and breakwater built in 2005 that provides a harbor of refuge.

### ***Highway 49 Wayside Park***

The Town of Waupun transferred ownership of the wayside to the county in the early 2000s. This 2-acre park was a State Highway 49 wayside park originally was a state highway wayside. Today the county maintains the Wayside that offers undeveloped green space, bank fishing on the Rock River and a few picnic tables.

### ***Northwoods Park***

Northwoods Park is a largely undeveloped 35-acre woods located on Highway 26 about two miles north of Rosendale. Improvements consist of hiking trails through the woods, and a small, gravel parking lot.

### ***Riggs County Park***

This park is the most recent addition to the county park system. At 300 acres, Riggs County Park is the county's largest park. Purchased in 1998, the park is a largely natural area park with 180 acres of wetlands, 70 acres of native prairie restoration and about 50 acres of active recreation areas. The park includes walking trails, a picnic area, a splash pad, a shelter, an observation deck, and a disc-golf course. A master plan prepared for the park in 1998-1999 is guiding development of the property.

### ***Raube Historical Site***

A private landowner gifted the Raube site to Fond du Lac County as a way of preserving a small remnant of Wisconsin's Military Road between Green Bay and Prairie du Chien. The site is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. The park is undeveloped except for a small gravel parking area and a State of Wisconsin historical marker.

### ***Roosevelt County Park***

Roosevelt Park is a three-acre park on the southeast shore of Lake Winnebago along Winnebago Drive. The long, narrow, park offers about 900 feet of Lake Winnebago shoreline. Facilities at the park include parking, toilets, and picnic tables and grills.

The park is a popular spot during the summer months for sunning, and for unsupervised swimming and wading in Lake Winnebago. Boaters often anchor offshore and wade to the park for picnics. Windsurfing has become a popular activity off the park, because of its location on the windward shore.

### ***Shaginappi Natural Area Park***

Acquired in 1997, this park is the site of a former Boy Scout camp. The park is a natural area of 100 acres of wetlands, lakeshore, woods and prairie. Situated adjacent to Columbia Park, the park shares Calumet Harbor. Pipe Creek winds through the park property. Hiking and skiing trails, a snowmobile trail and Rotary Lodge are the primary attractions to the park. Due to extensive archeological findings on the site, the park has potential for historical interpretation and a museum.

### ***Veterans Park***

Veterans Park is located on Main Street at the corner of Western Avenue in downtown Fond du Lac, on the site of the former county courthouse. The county dedicated the park in honor of all Fond du Lac County veterans.

The park is a popular spot for walking, lunches and for quiet contemplation. It has become the focal point of Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, of the annual holiday parade and tree lighting, and of several other annual functions.

### ***Waupun County Park***

Waupun County Park is the second largest county park at 103 acres. It is located one mile northwest of the City of Waupun, along County Highway MMM.

The park contains a wooded 42 unit public campground, with electrical hookups, restrooms, and showers. Facilities include playground equipment, three open-air picnic shelters, and one enclosed shelter.

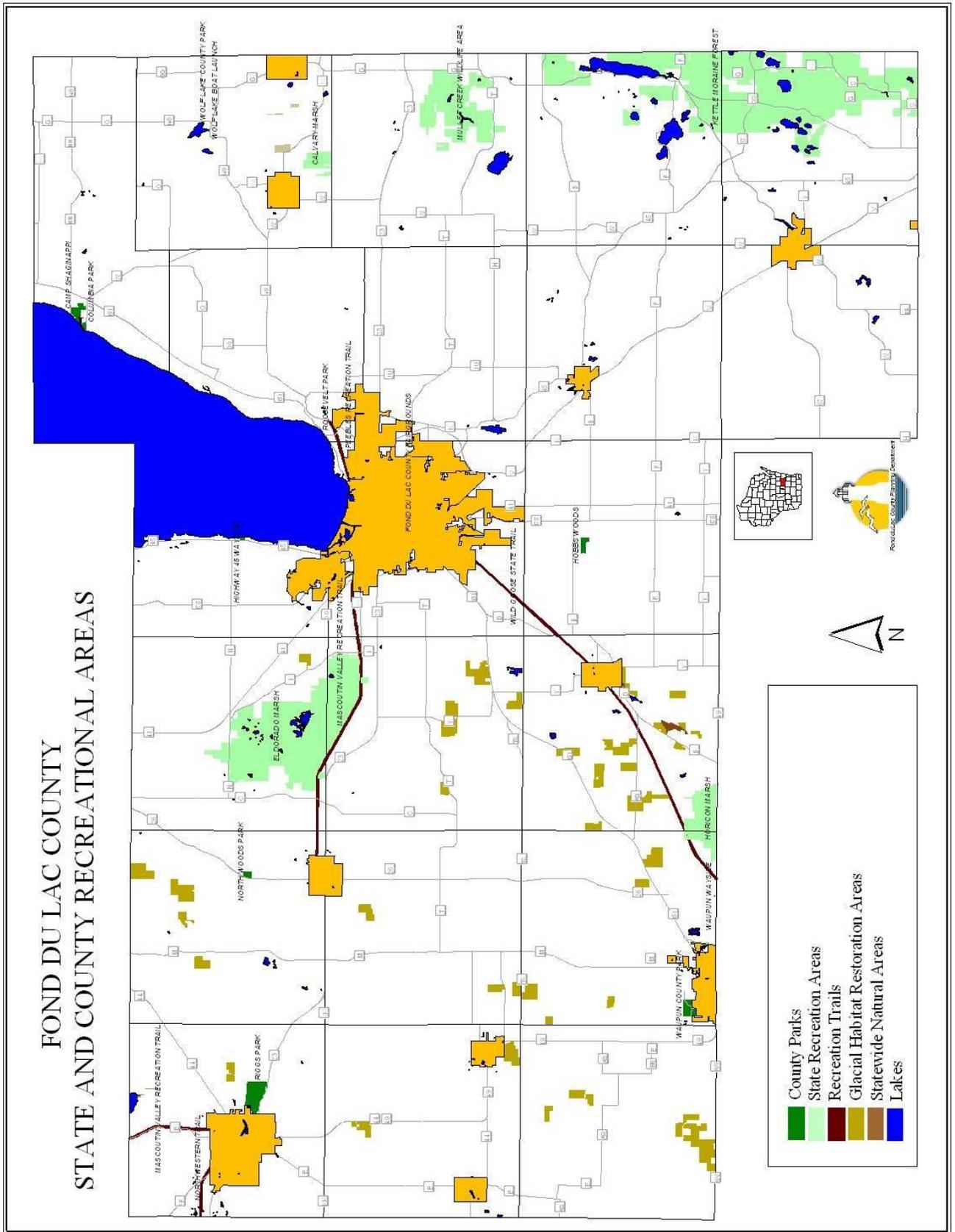
The northeastern 40 acres of the park is a State Natural Area, with hiking and skiing trails. It is an excellent example of a southern mesic hardwood forest, with red and white oak, maple, and white ash.

Past improvements at Waupun County Park include a reconstruction of the campground, construction of a bike/ped path into Waupun, and construction of a new campground bathroom.

### ***Wolf Lake County Park***

This four-acre park is located in the northeastern part of Fond du Lac County, about two miles northeast of the Village of Mt. Calvary, along Highway 149. The park is located on Wolf Lake, and includes a boat launch with parking, a sand beach with a designated swimming area, a picnic shelter and picnic facilities, playground equipment, and a bathroom building with changing stalls and outdoor showers.

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**Table 5 County Recreation Facilities**

| Facility               | Mi. | Ac.   | Camping | Restrooms | Showers | Sanitary Dump Station | Picnic Tables | Shelters | Hall | Hunting | Boat Launch | Swimming | Playground | Hiking | Bicycling | Snowmobiling | Equestrian | X-C Skiing |
|------------------------|-----|-------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|---------------|----------|------|---------|-------------|----------|------------|--------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Calvary Marsh          |     | 250   |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      | x       | x           |          |            | x      |           | x            |            | x          |
| Columbia Park          |     | 19    | x       | x         | x       | x                     | x             | x        | x    |         | x           |          | x          |        |           |              |            |            |
| Eisenbahn Trail        | 12  | 109   |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      |           |              |            |            |
| Fairgrounds            |     | 90    | x       | x         |         | x                     | x             | x        |      |         |             | x        | x          |        |           |              |            |            |
| Highway 45 Wayside     |     | 8     |         | x         |         |                       | x             | x        |      |         |             |          |            |        |           |              |            |            |
| Hobbs Woods            |     | 60    |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      |           |              |            | x          |
| Mascoutin Valley Trail | 22  | 176   |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      | x         | x            | x          | x          |
| Northwestern Trail     | 2   | 20    |         |           |         |                       | x             |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      | x         | x            |            | x          |
| Northwoods Park        |     | 35    |         |           |         |                       | x             |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      |           |              |            | x          |
| Peebles Trail          | 6   | 22    |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      | x         |              |            | x          |
| Prairie Trail          | 7   | 17    |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      | x         |              |            |            |
| Riggs County Park      |     | 300   |         | x         |         |                       | x             | x        |      |         |             |          | x          | x      |           |              |            | x          |
| Rolling Meadows G.C.   |     | 235   |         | x         | x       |                       |               | x        | x    |         |             |          |            |        |           |              |            |            |
| Roosevelt Park         |     | 3     |         | x         |         |                       | x             |          |      |         |             | x        |            |        |           |              |            |            |
| Shaginappi Park        |     | 100   |         | x         |         |                       |               |          | x    |         |             | x        |            | x      | x         | x            |            | x          |
| Snowmobile Trails      | 300 |       |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            |        |           | x            |            |            |
| Veteran's Park         |     | 1     |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            |        |           |              |            |            |
| Waupun Park            |     | 103   | x       | x         | x       | x                     | x             | x        | x    |         |             |          | x          | x      |           | x            |            | x          |
| Waupun Wayside         |     | 2     |         |           |         |                       | x             |          |      |         |             |          |            |        |           |              |            |            |
| Wild Goose Trail       | 13  | 191   |         |           |         |                       | x             |          |      |         |             |          |            | x      | x         | x            |            | x          |
| Wolf Lake Park         |     | 4     |         |           |         |                       | x             | x        |      |         | x           | x        | x          |        |           |              |            |            |
| Total Mi./Ac.          | 362 | 1,745 |         |           |         |                       |               |          |      |         |             |          |            |        |           |              |            |            |

Source: Fond du Lac County Planning Department, 2019.

## **COUNTY RECREATION TRAILS**

Fond du Lac County planned and developed its first recreation trail in the 1980s. Known then as the Tri-County Trail, this trail was a cooperative effort between Green Lake, Winnebago and Fond du Lac Counties. More recently, the county and neighboring counties along with the DNR established expanded the former Tri-County Trail as the Mascoutin Valley State Trail between Fond du Lac and Berlin.

In 1988, in a cooperative agreement with the DNR and Dodge and Fond du Lac Counties, the three parties planned, developed and now maintain the Wild Goose State Trail between Fond du Lac and Clyman Junction, some 34 miles of multiple purpose recreation trail. The trail was the first of its kind, a state/counties effort. A cooperative agreement with the state gave them purchasing responsibility of the abandoned railroad grade for the location of the trail. The agreement gave the two counties the responsibility to develop and maintain the trail in accordance with state trail standards.

The DNR acquired the Fox Valley Western Railroad between Eden and West Bend in the late 1990s by the state. Fond du Lac and Washington Counties collaborated with the state to create the Eisenbahn State Trail. The Eisenbahn State Trail is a multiple use recreation trail similar to the Wild Goose and Mascoutin Valley trails.

The county in recent years has established a number of other local trails on former railroad right-of-ways and along highways. The overall goal of the county's trail program has been to interconnect recreation trails and parks in the county while making connections with trails in neighboring counties.

### ***County Snowmobile Trail System***

The Fond du Lac County snowmobile trail system consists of approximately 255 miles of groomed snowmobile trails on privately owned land. Another 45 miles of state funded trails are located on state and county owned lands. Funded almost completely by the Wisconsin DNR through annual grants, local snowmobile clubs groom and maintain these trails for snowmobile use. The system includes three trails owned/operated by the DNR/Fond du Lac County, described later.

The county's role in most of the system consists of applying for and administering annual DNR snowmobile grants, ensuring compliance with state regulations and guidelines, and planning improvements.

### ***Eisenbahn State Trail***

The counties constructed this trail on the abandoned Fox Valley Railroad right of way between Eden and West Bend. The Eisenbahn State Trail is a multiple purpose trail similar in construction and uses to the Wild Goose Trail. The trail connects parks in Eden, Campbellsport, Kewaskum and West Bend. If rail abandonment occurs between Eden and Fond du Lac, the

abandon line can become a connection to the Prairie Trail and indirectly connect with the Plank, Wild Goose and Eisenbahn Trails.

### ***Northwestern Trail***

The Northwestern Trail is a short segment of railroad right-of-way located between the city of Ripon and the west county line. This trail is about two and one-half miles in length. The trail is part of the county snowmobile trail system and hikers, bicyclists and runners use the trail year round. Snowmobiles run on the rural section of this trail. Fond du Lac County maintains an ongoing lease with Wisconsin Power and Light for this trail. Green Lake County is taking steps to extend this trail west into the City of Green Lake along State Highway 23.

### ***Mascoutin Valley State Trail***

The Mascoutin Valley State Trail is a 32-mile State park trail, twenty-two miles of which are located in Fond du Lac County. Trail surfacing is limestone screenings between Berlin and Ripon similar to the Wild Goose Trail. Hiking, cycling, running, equestrian use and snowmobiling are the primary uses of the trail. The Ripon to Rosendale section of the former railroad property is in private ownership, making trail improvements unlikely. The Rosendale to Fond du Lac section of the trail passes through the DNR owned Eldorado Marsh.

### ***Peebles Trail***

The Peebles Trail is a 5.6-mile segment of abandoned railroad right-of-way and active road right-of-way between Fond du Lac and St. Peter. Walkers, runners and bicyclists all use the trail that connects Fond du Lac and St. Peter.

### ***Prairie Trail***

This 7-mile trail along the Highway 151 Fond du Lac bypass serves bicyclists, walkers, runners and roller-bladers. The county and city worked with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to design and build the trail with financial assistance from WisDOT, the WDNR, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County and the Rotary Clubs of Fond du Lac. The asphalt-paved trail is part of a connecting system of trails to link the Wild Goose Trail, the Peebles Trail and the future Plank Trail. The trail is now part of the Fond du Lac Loop, a city trail of on and off street paths for bicycling.

### ***Wild Goose State Trail***

Dodge and Fond du Lac counties maintain the Wild Goose State Trail. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns the trail right-of-way. Thirteen miles of the 34-mile trail are located in Fond du Lac County. The trail is a former railroad right-of-way with a surface of limestone screenings. Trail parking in Fond du Lac County is available at the Fond du Lac trailhead, in Oakfield and at State Highway 49. A trail extension done in 2009 over Interstate 41 to Pioneer Road, connecting to a side-path trail on Pioneer Road between Military Road and US

Highway 45. The Wild Goose State Trail is a popular trail for bicycle riding and hiking in spring, summer and fall, and snowmobiling in the winter.

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## SECTION 2: THE PLANNING PROCESS

The county prepared the original Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan for Fond du Lac County in 1979 and updated the plan on a 5-year interval. The plan serves Fond du Lac County as a guide in recreation and park planning and development, and enables the county to participate in State and Federal recreation grant programs. This updated plan will continue to serve both functions.

The County Planning & Parks department sent draft copies of the plan out for review to interested County Board Supervisors and county staff, all thirty-three municipalities in the county, DNR staff and other interested parties. Staff incorporated comments and suggestions from these participants into the final draft of the plan. The County Board approved the plan after a public hearing held by the UW-Extension Education, Agriculture and Recreation Committee of the County Board.

A list of the individuals and organizations that received a draft of this Plan follows below:

UW-Extension Education, Agriculture and  
Recreation Committee of the County Board

Michael J. Will  
Committee Chair

Sam Kaufman  
Vice-Chair

Sarah A. Everson

Robert J. Giese

John J. Rickert

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Director of Public Works  
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Mike Ehrenberg  
Director of Public Works  
City of Ripon  
100 Jackson St.  
Ripon, WI 54971

Jeff Daane  
Public Works Director  
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Campbellsport Village Clerk  
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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following statements of goals and objectives come from, with some modifications, the original Fond du Lac County Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan, adopted in 1979.

### Goal 1

Establish and maintain a countywide system of parks and trails that will meet the needs of Fond du Lac County residents.

#### Objectives:

1. Continue to cooperate with and assist municipalities and other organizations in recreation planning and development.
2. Provide facilities with a variety of available activities that accommodate the special needs of the elderly and disabled.
3. Acquire and develop park sites and facilities based on recommended standards, community needs, and the existing distribution of parks and other recreational facilities.
4. Provide recreational facilities that fill unmet recreational needs and preserve threatened natural resources and features.
5. Establish a system of interconnecting trails for recreation and alternate transportation that link to each other and to existing parks and public open spaces throughout the county. Include connections to neighboring counties.

### Goal 2

Establish and maintain a system of parks and recreational facilities that help to conserve the natural resources and environment of Fond du Lac County, and make them available for recreational use and/or conservation purposes.

#### Objectives:

1. Consider environmental impacts in locating and developing all types of recreational facilities.
2. Provide buildings and intensive or active recreation uses only in those areas of least environmental sensitivity.
3. Acquire, or assist other agencies to acquire and protect properties that are environmentally sensitive or unique.

### Goal 3

Operate and improve the county parks system, and other county recreational facilities, in an efficient and organized manner.

#### Objectives:

1. Utilize the recreation plan and the parks capital improvements plan in facility planning and development.
2. Utilize county, State, Federal and private resources to develop and maintain high quality facilities.
3. Utilize, to the fullest extent possible, the skills and energy of county staff and officials in facility planning, development, and operation.

### Goal 4

Promote Fond du Lac County parks, open spaces and recreation trails to gain maximum utilization and appreciation of these facilities.

#### Objectives:

1. Promote county parks, open spaces and recreation trails through other county departments, the Fond du Lac Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau and the State of Wisconsin.
2. Prepare and distribute promotional materials with the locations and descriptions of county parks, open spaces and trails.
3. Work in cooperation with Healthy Fond du Lac County 2020 to promote a greater awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities in Fond du Lac County and encourage children and their parents to take advantage of healthy outdoor recreation opportunities in the county.

## **SECTION 3: RECREATION DEMAND AND NEEDS**

Recreational demand and need is calculations utilize the system of recreation standards developed by the National Recreational and Park Association (NRPA). The NRPA has developed standards for use as a guide in determining present and future demand for both total park acreage and for facility type. In other words, the standards can be used to help determine whether enough total recreational *acreage* is available for the needs of the citizens of Fond du Lac County, and also to determine whether the proper *facilities* are available in sufficient quantities.

Utilizing the NRPA acreage standards, based on the population of Fond du Lac County and on population projections, Table 7 provides acreage standards for the present and the near-term future within the county. We can see in Table 7 that there is no unmet *acreage* needs for recreational purposes in the year 2000 and beyond. This assumes that population projections for the county are accurate. Several recent purchases, most notably Shaginappi Park and Riggs County Park, filled the acreage need documented in the 1995 recreation plan.

**Table 6 Present/Projected Recreational Demand and Needs (acres)**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Population</b> | <b>Low End Demand</b> | <b>High End Demand</b> | <b>Existing Acres</b> | <b>Low End Need*</b> | <b>High End Need*</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1980        | 88,964            | 1,334                 | 1,779                  | 1,299                 | -35                  | -480                  |
| 1985        | 90,012            | 1,350                 | 1,800                  | 1,299                 | -51                  | -501                  |
| 1990        | 91,000            | 1,365                 | 1,820                  | 1,520                 | 155                  | -300                  |
| 1995        | 96,432            | 1,446                 | 1,929                  | 1,671                 | 225                  | -258                  |
| 2000        | 98,018            | 1,470                 | 1,960                  | 2,515                 | 1,045                | 555                   |
| 2010        | 103,385           | 1,550                 | 2,066                  | 2,515                 | 965                  | 449                   |
| 2020        | 108,867           | 1,633                 | 2,177                  | 2,485                 | 852                  | 308                   |

\*Unmet Need (acres) calculated from top of demand range.

Sources: Demographic Services Center, Wisconsin Population Projections, Estimates, 1999. NRPA standards abstracted from draft DNR Guidelines for Development of Local Outdoor Recreation Plans.

Notes: Demand calculated based on NRPA standard of approximately 15-20 acres recreational space demand per 1000 population. Excludes State and Federal regional parks, etc.

Existing acreage includes county, municipal, and school district recreational facilities, but does not include Rolling Meadows Golf Course, the Fairgrounds outside the park, Kiekhaefer Park, or Supples Marsh, which are unique facilities outside the standards.

Based on Table 7, there is no need in Fond du Lac County for additional park acres of outdoor recreation space in the next seven to ten years. However, geographic distribution and to some extent terrain and landform types are also factors in parkland need. Future acquisitions in Fond du Lac County should be made with an eye toward filling geographical gaps, especially near population centers of the county and where recreation trails may be located on abandoned railroad right-of-ways.

The Fond du Lac County Outdoor Recreation and Open Space plan for many years has included a goal of ledge preservation through county purchase of a high quality segment of the Escarpment and surrounding land. This effort should go forward despite any short-term parkland surplus.

Also worth noting is the recent successful effort to designate the Niagara Escarpment as a unique natural resource in Wisconsin. Niagara Escarpment enthusiasts successfully lobbied the Legislature and the Governor during 2011 to place a special designation on the Escarpment to help steer Wisconsin Stewardship grant dollars toward this unique and disappearing geographic feature on Wisconsin's landscape. In addition, the 2005-2010 SCORP lists Wisconsin's Niagara as a Wisconsin Land Legacy Area. The original designation of Land Legacy Area came from a multi-year, statewide effort to identify Wisconsin's unique and endangered lands.

## **SECTION 4: PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **COUNTY RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

These recommendations are based on the information contained in the first three sections of this recreation plan, and on recommendations of citizens, elected officials and other agencies. Recommendations are made regarding land acquisition and development. Recommendations require County Board approval individually before implementation.

#### ***Acquisition***

Recommended land acquisition within the next five to ten years, not listed in any particular order or priority.

1. Purchase land to enlarge Hobbs Woods. The 60-acre park has become so popular, especially given its location near Fond du Lac that it is over-utilized. The park attracts users because of its natural beauty, quiet forested setting, and Parsons Creek. As use has gotten quite heavy, however, the park has at times become overcrowded, which harms the park physically, and spoils the recreational experience for the user.
2. Purchase additional parkland near Fond du Lac, as well as land on the Niagara Escarpment that includes examples of the unique microenvironments found within the cliff faces along some areas of the escarpment. The Oakfield Ledge State Natural Area is an excellent example of the escarpment that includes such unique features. The escarpment is gradually being lost to private development. Given the urban growth occurring in Fond du Lac, and in the surrounding towns of Empire, Friendship, Fond du Lac and Taycheedah, the need exists in a geographic sense for one additional county park. Existing county facilities in the Fond du Lac area are heavily utilized. Some county parks, like Hobbs Woods are already overcrowded during peak spring and fall weekends. Sites along the escarpment that offer examples of the unique features including cliff faces, caves, and similar microenvironments sought out with an eye toward acquisition.
3. Support municipal efforts throughout the county to provide waterfront parkland, parkways and trails to improve access to rivers, streams, and lakes for water based outdoor recreation. Past examples include a riverside trail in the Campbellsport Village Park and the wetlands walkway in the Brandon Village Park.

4. Expand the existing network of recreation trails in Fond du Lac County. The county is in a unique position to collaborate with the state and with local communities to develop a countywide network of multiple-purpose, year round recreation trails. Current examples include connection of the Wild Goose State Trail with the Prairie Trail along the US 151 bypass in Fond du Lac and to the Peebles Trail between Fond du Lac and St. Peter. Specific trail links that the county should encourage include the following:

- Extension of the Eisenbahn State Trail from Eden into the city of Fond du Lac including a connection to the Prairie Trail.
- Extension of the Mascoutin Valley State Trail from Rolling Meadows Drive over Highway 41 into the city of Fond du Lac. This extension will link North Fond du Lac to the county trail network.
- Extension of the Mascoutin Valley State Trail through the city of Ripon to Murray Park with a connection to the Northwestern Trail.
- Completion of the Mascoutin Valley State Trail between Ripon and Rosendale.
- Support a city of Waupun effort to extend a side path trail from the city to the Wild Goose Trail. A trail extension could occur as part of a future reconstruction of Highway 49 project.
- Support WisDOT efforts to provide paved shoulder on road reconstruction projects within Fond du Lac County. Paved shoulders provide both transportation and recreation alternatives for local residents often providing them a safe route to less traveled, nearby town roads and county highways.
- Support the Fond du Lac Loop in Fond du Lac. Portions of the Fond du Lac Loop exist with the Peebles Trail, the Prairie Trail and the Pioneer Road side-path. Planning for and constructing the completion of this loop in the city will provide walkers, runners and bicyclists with a great opportunity for both recreation and transportation use of the loop trail.

### ***Development by Facility***

#### Columbia Park

The county last dredged Calumet Harbor in 2004, before that in 1979 or about a 25-year interval. By 2029, the harbor may need dredging. In the next five years, the county should hire a consultant to complete soundings of the harbor, compare soundings against desired channel depths and determine quantities of dredge spoils for the next dredging of the navigation channel, from the boat launches to the lake. Use findings in the soundings report to prepare budgets and seek grant dollars schedule the next round of harbor dredging, likely in the 2024-2029 period. The DNR Recreational Boating Facilities grant program is available to help fund this effort. The grant program is limited to navigation channel dredging.

#### Highway 45

Ongoing experience with the breakwater and boat launch lanes seems to indicate that the boating facility will frequently fill with silt as the result of storms from the south and southeast, making the facility unusable. It is time to prepare for the addition of a south breakwater to protect the launch lanes from southerly storms and resulting siltation of the launch. In the next

five years, it is recommended that the county hire a consultant to complete engineering, bid specifications and cost estimates for the south breakwater. Then follow up with budgeting for the project and seek Recreational Boating Facility grant dollars to help fund the project.

#### Waupun County Park

The county and city should work together to extend a walking and cycling path from the city to the park along C.T.H. MMM from south of the park. City residents use this route for daily walks to and through the park. A path would be a useful addition, better connecting the park to the city and many of the users of Waupun County Park.

#### Riggs County Park

Monitor use of the park and add one additional piece of playground equipment in the established play area at the Douglas Street entrance. Reconstruct and downsize the asphalt parking lot near the east end of the park.

#### Hobbs Woods Natural Area

Purchase additional land for the expansion of Hobbs Woods. Design and construct new walking trails. Continue abandoning volunteer trails in accordance with the trail plan done in 2018. There may be opportunities to make further stream and water quality improvements on newly acquired land to improve trout habitat.

#### Shaginappi Natural Area Park

Renovate or replace the pit toilet building. Replacement might be a freestanding building or within the lodge and accessible from outside doors during times the lodge is locked and not in use. Rotary Lodge is in need of a top to bottom renovation to include indoor plumbing. Connect the Lodge to the sanitary sewer system.

Explore the feasibility of a natural history museum operated out of the lodge with a volunteer, non-profit organization. The park's location on Lake Winnebago and the rich archeological sites in and around the park make a museum a natural addition to the park.

Complete a selective timber harvest of the pine plantations found on the north and south ends of the park.

#### Northwoods Park

Expand the walking trail system within the park. Complete a timber evaluation and conduct a timber harvest designed to sustain the hardwoods forest. Identify and eliminate invasive species of plants within the park.

#### Wild Goose State Trail

Support an extension of the Wild Goose State Trail to the city of Waupun. Support the completion of a multiple use trail along Pioneer Road and Park Avenue to provide a connection to the Prairie Trail. Work with the city to establish a 12-15 mile loop trail within Fond du Lac using a combination of existing trails and surface streets designated for trail use.

Continue working on the elimination of invasive species, especially within the Oakfield Prairie State Natural Area portion of the trail.

#### Mascoutin Valley Park Trail

The Mascoutin Valley Trail is a multiple-purpose recreation trail that is a cooperative effort between Fond du Lac County, neighboring counties and the DNR. The trail is on an abandoned railroad right-of-way and extends from Berlin to Fond du Lac by way of Ripon, Rosendale and Eldorado. Development of the trail is complete between Ripon and Berlin. Purchase the right of way between Ripon and Rosendale should the opportunity arise. The State of Wisconsin owns the trail between Rosendale and Fond du Lac. The state would likely make this purchase, acting as our trail partner.

In Ripon, support construction of a three-quarter mile linking trail between the Mascoutin Valley State Park Trail at Eureka Street and the Northwestern Trail somewhere near Meade Street. Murray Park is a likely route for this trail extension. With plans by Green Lake County for a trail along Highway 23 to CTH PP, the Ripon link is another small step toward a continuous bicycle & pedestrian path between Green Lake and Sheboygan.

Continue working on the elimination of invasive species, especially within the Eldorado Marsh portion of the trail.

If a future Interstate 41 project occurs for the highway north of CTH 000, work with WisDOT to establish a crossing of the highway with a new pedestrian bridge, similar to the WGST crossing near the Hickory Road interchange. A dedicated trail extension east of Interstate 41 to North Peters Avenue would tie into on-street bicycle routes in North Fond du Lac and Fond du Lac and encourage more use of the Mascoutin Valley State Trail.

#### Peebles Trail

Continue drainage improvements on the trail. Much of the trail is in need of ditch cleaning. Continue working on the elimination of invasive species within the trail right of way.

#### Eisenbahn State Trail

Work toward the extension of the trail north from Eden to Fond du Lac with a connection to the Prairie Trail. Continue to monitor railroad abandonments in the county and especially this section of railroad between Eden and Fond du Lac.

Identify areas infested with invasive species and work toward elimination of invasive species.

#### Northwestern Trail

Work with the city and Ripon service organizations to fund and construct a pedestrian bridge over Washington Street. The approach to Washington Street from the trail is steep and difficult to maintain. The concrete abutments on each side of the street creates a poor line of sight for motorists and this can make crossing the street dangerous. If feasible, use the existing concrete abutments for a new 85-90 foot pedestrian bridge. An assessment by a PE is a first step to assure that the abutments are sound. The cost of a new steel, clear span pedestrian bridge is approximately \$100,000. Demolition of the old abutments, construction of new abutments and

placement of the new bridge might cost another \$175,000. The life expectancy of this kind of bridge is 50+ years. A competitive outdoor recreation grant application for this project must include funding from service clubs, the city and county and be a collaborative effort.

If the opportunity arises, work with Green Lake County to connect the Northwestern Trail with the Green Lake Greenway Trail along Highway 23. Modest bicycle/pedestrian accommodations along CTH PP, between the Northwestern Trail and Highway 23 offers the needed link to the Green Lake trail once the trail is extended to the Fond du Lac County line.

### Plank Trail

In October of 2019, the county and WDOT signed an agreement for construction of the Plank Trail between Division Road at the east county line and the Highway 151 Fond du Lac bypass. Sheboygan County entered into a similar agreement to extend the Plank Trail from Greenbush, the current west limit of the trail to Division Road. Completion of the trail is set for late 2022. This 33-mile asphalt paved trail combined with 3 miles of city bike paths and routes provides cyclists with a nearly road-free route to Lake Michigan.

Fond du Lac County's estimated cost share on the 12 miles of trail in the county is \$1,800,000 and is set for budgeting in 2021-2022. The county should take advantage of outdoor recreation grant opportunities in 2020-2022 offering up to 50/50 match.

After completion of the trail, the county must install traffic signs, trail identification signs at major road crossings and information kiosks at CTH UU and CTH G.

### Prairie Trail

Evaluate the asphalt trail surface each year and be prepared to resurface the trail in the next 5-6 years. The existing trail pavement is about 17 years old.

### ATV Trails

Every year, snowmobile clubs maintain and groom about 250 miles of winter trails on private land across Fond du Lac County. In recent years, snow conditions limited the number of open trail days to single digits. Snowless winters may be part of a short-term weather pattern or part of a longer-term trend. The result though is that clubs set up and take down the trails that get little or no use despite all of the labor and dollars invested in these trails.

ATV riders in the county continue to seek opportunities to ride trails during winter months. Snowmobile and ATV groups could collaborate and investigate the feasibility of running ATVs and snowmobiles on the existing 250-mile countywide trail system on private land. The snowmobile and ATV grant programs fund this kind of collaborative effort for motorized trail systems. The snowmobile trail system developed by local snowmobile clubs crosses a variety of terrain and land cover. ATV riders, under appropriate winter weather conditions, would enjoy the same 250-mile trail system that snowmobilers enjoyed for many decades. Snowmobilers that also own and ride ATVs could enjoy the trail system on snowless years when the ground is frozen and temperatures are below freezing.

### Rail to ATV Trails

There are few remaining opportunities around the county for rail to trail conversions. Two opportunities remain. The best opportunity might be the active Wisconsin Southern railroad line through the western part of the county. The line generally runs between Waupun and Ripon, a distance of approximately 15 miles. This line is active today, but in the event that rail traffic were to ever drop to unsustainable levels, a plan like this with a designation as a future ATV trail would be a first step toward creating ATV riding opportunities in the future. A future rail to ATV trail conversion might be for year round ATV riding. An ATV trail between Waupun and Ripon might be attractive to ATV riders. The rail corridor offers opportunities to extend to Oshkosh, Markesan and points south to Dodge County and beyond. A second rail to ATV trail conversion might take place on the long abandon Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad. WisDOT owns portions of the line and larger portions are in private ownership. The line generally runs north and south and is located between Hickory and River Roads in the town of Byron.

Rail to ATV trail conversions are low cost investments in outdoor recreation. The largest part of this kind of trail project is purchasing real estate. If the W & S rail line were to become a state trail, the state purchases the real estate. Railroad trestles require decks and railings that eligible for ATV and snowmobile grant dollars at 100% reimbursement. Existing railroad ballast is a suitable trail surface for both ATVs and snowmobiles. Waupun, Brandon, Fairwater, Markesan and Ripon might all be connected with a dedicated year round ATV trail on the W & S rail line. The potential exists to extend this trail to Oshkosh.

### State Road Pedestrian-Bicycle Facilities

Support Wisconsin Department of Transportation efforts to provide paved shoulders on state road projects within Fond du Lac County. Paved shoulders provide both transportation alternatives and recreation opportunities for nearby residents and others, often providing safe routes to less traveled local roads.

### Gottfried Arboretum

Establish trail links to the soccer field complex on the west side of the UW Fond du Lac Campus, to the Moraine Park Technical College campus, and to the Fond du Lac High School. Connect the formal arboretum trails with the walking trail through the prairie in the former Campus Drive roadway. Widen and improve the formal arboretum trails to assure that they meet state and federal accessibility standards.

## **SECTION 5: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

This capital improvement plan is an exercise to plan and schedule capital improvements for county parks and trails over the next five-year period. It is important to note that actual annual expenditures and priorities must be determined during the annual budget process, utilizing the normal interactive process between County Board Committees, the County Executive, and the County Board as a whole and county staff. This capital improvement plan will serve as a useful tool in the decision-making process during each of the next five county budgets.

Many of the projects listed in this CIP are grant eligible under a number of state and federal outdoor recreation grant programs. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Program and the Gaylord-Nelson Stewardship Program are both reliable sources for land acquisition grants and all of the land acquisition projects listed in this CIP qualify and would be competitive in these grant programs. Grants under these programs are typically 50/50 matching grants. In addition to the grant programs mentioned above, there are a number of other State and Federal grant programs administered by the WDNR, WisDOT and the U.S. Department of the Interior that offer funding, from 50/50 to as much as 100/0 grant/local funds for development projects. Development projects listed in the CIP all fall within one or more of the various grants eligibility requirements from these state and federal agencies.

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## 2020-2024 Parks and Trails Capital Improvement Program

|   | Project Cost | Potential Grant Funding | Local Match |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| <b>2020 County Park Projects</b>                |              |                         |             |
| Plank Trail Construction, asphalt, 6 mi.        | \$900,000    | \$450,000               | \$450,000   |
| Wolf Lake pier reconstruction                   | \$19,500     | \$9,750                 | \$9,750     |
| Hobbs Woods gravel parking lot                  | \$32,000     | \$0                     | \$32,000    |
| Hobbs Woods trails renovation & development     | \$23,000     | \$0                     | \$23,000    |
| Year Total                                      | \$974,500    | \$459,750               | \$514,750   |
| <b>2021 County Park Projects</b>                |              |                         |             |
| Plank Trail Construction, asphalt, 6 mi.        | \$900,000    | \$450,000               | \$450,000   |
| Rotary Lodge renovation                         | \$500,000    | \$0                     | \$500,000   |
| Riggs County Park rebuild east parking lot      | \$25,000     | \$0                     | \$25,000    |
| Year Total                                      | \$1,425,000  | \$450,000               | \$975,000   |
| <b>2022 County Park Projects</b>                |              |                         |             |
| Engineering for dredging Calumet Harbor         | \$40,000     | \$0                     | \$40,000    |
| Resurface Peebles Trail, limestone, 2.1 mi.     | \$48,800     | \$24,000                | \$24,000    |
| Year Total                                      | \$88,800     | \$24,000                | \$64,000    |
| <b>2023 County Park Projects</b>                |              |                         |             |
| Replace boaters septic station                  | \$15,000     | \$11,250                | \$3,750     |
| Dredge Calumet Harbor                           | \$300,000    | \$150,000               | \$150,000   |
| Northwestern Trail, Washington St. Bridge       | \$275,000    | \$137,500               | \$137,500   |
| Year Total                                      | \$590,000    | \$298,750               | \$291,250   |
| <b>2024 County Park Projects</b>                |              |                         |             |
| Riggs farmhouse renovation                      | \$5,000      | \$0                     | \$5,000     |
| Mascoutin Valley Trail parking lot construction | \$10,000     | \$10,000                | \$0         |
| Riggs County Park rebuild east parking lot      | \$25,000     | \$0                     | \$25,000    |
| Prairie Trail resurfacing, 6 miles              | \$800,000    | \$400,000               | \$400,000   |
| Year Total                                      | \$840,000    | \$410,000               | \$430,000   |
| Five Year Total                                 | \$3,918,300  | \$1,642,500             | \$2,275,000 |

Source: Fond du Lac County Planning & Parks Department, 2019