

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

SUBJECT: Approval of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis.

FOR: August 2016 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Diane Brusoe, Property Planning Section Chief

SUMMARY:

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis is a revision of the original plan for the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway (LWSR) that was approved by the Natural Resources Board in 1988. The LWSR, located in Dane, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, Grant and Crawford counties, includes the lower Wisconsin River from the Prairie du Sac dam to the Mississippi River and approximately 45,000 acres of uplands, wetlands and bluffs. The draft master plan also includes Tower Hill State Park, which is a 76.5-acre property located in Iowa County near Spring Green.

Master plan recommendations are guided and influenced by existing statutes, administrative codes, scientific data, ecological capacity of the property resources, changes in conditions and use patterns, and public input. The department held four public meetings along the Riverway at various phases in the planning process. A combined total of 234 people attended the four meetings and hundreds of comments were submitted in a variety of formats.

Accordingly, the plan recommends increasing public access on lightly developed roads and newly designated trails, providing additional camping opportunities on the Wisconsin River, and providing lightly developed day use areas in strategic locations. The plan will maintain and improve the quality and extent of various habitat types to sustain wildlife populations and provide recreational opportunities.

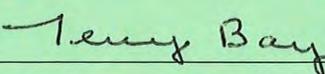
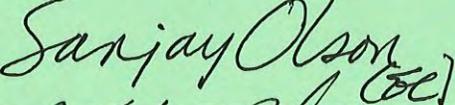
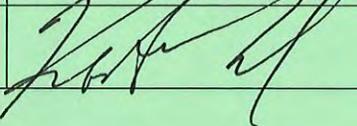
The plan proposes a project boundary increase of 835 acres (406 acres are already DNR-owned) and a project boundary contraction of 65 acres for a net project boundary increase of 790 acres. Most of the boundary expansion is located in the area around Black Hawk Ridge with the goal of improving access to the ridgetop day use area. Note the 790-acre project boundary adjustment also includes map digitizing error corrections totaling 20 acres. No changes are proposed to the acquisition goal.

Link to the master planning documents and maps:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Lands/MasterPlanning/LowerWisconsin/>

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis, including project boundary adjustments, per NR 44.04(3), Wis. Adm. Code.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background memo | <input type="checkbox"/> Type name of attachment if applicable |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Revised Master Plan (documents located online: dnr.wi.gov , "lower wisconsin state riverway") | <input type="checkbox"/> Type name of attachment if applicable |

Approved by	Signature	Date
Terry Bay - Bureau Director, Facilities & Lands		6/28/16
Sanjay Olson - Division Administrator, Fish, Wildlife & Parks		6/28/16
Cathy Stepp, Secretary		7/13/16

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 27, 2016

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Cathy Stepp – Secretary, Department of Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Requesting approval of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis.

Project Description

This draft master plan includes the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway and Tower Hill State Park. The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway (LWSR) is located in Dane, Sauk, Iowa, Richland, Grant and Crawford counties. It includes the lower Wisconsin River from the Prairie du Sac dam to the Mississippi River and approximately 45,000 acres of uplands, wetlands and bluffs. The Riverway's breadth and abundance of natural communities and rare species are of statewide and regional significance. The property is a popular destination for land and water recreational activities including fishing, paddling, camping, and sightseeing as well as hunting, trapping, hiking and nature enjoyment. With a largely undeveloped shoreline, numerous islands and shifting sandbars, the Riverway provides unique recreational experiences for its visitors. Tower Hill State Park is located in Iowa County in the center of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway just south of Spring Green. The 76.5-acre park is on the south bank of the Wisconsin River and is a popular stop for visitors to picnic, camp, hike and enjoy the scenic vistas afforded by the bluff top trails.

Public Involvement

During the development of the draft master plan, the department held four public meetings, two in Boscobel, WI and two in Sauk City, WI, to seek public review and comments. At each phase of the review process public and partners were informed by statewide press release. Email distribution via GovD was also sent to over 1,000 subscribers. Email and postal announcements were sent to a list of nearly 90 known stakeholders, including citizens, interest groups, and public and private organizations. The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board and local units of government were contacted and informed directly. The department received hundreds of comments in various forms during the planning process including online questionnaires, comment sheets, emails, phone calls and letters.

Public Meeting Date	# Signed in	Location
April 22, 2014	51	Sauk City
April 23, 2014	35	Boscobel
March 29, 2016	57	Boscobel
March 31, 2016	91	Sauk City

Significant Issues of Public Interest

The LWSR is a significant public property in terms of its high use levels, large size, and unique recreation opportunities. A number of themes emerged throughout the plan review process including:

- Maintaining the largely undeveloped and scenic qualities of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway and maintaining or improving the water quality in both the river and backwaters of the lower Wisconsin River.

- Enhancing the recreational experience of the LWSR by providing additional camping opportunities along with additional rustic day use areas, additional trails and improved launches.
- Balancing user access with managing and protecting our resources.

Closure of the Mazomanie beach area generated many comments. However, this was an administrative decision that is not directed by the draft master plan.

Highlights of the Draft Master Plan

The draft master plan for your review and approval balances the properties' resources and capabilities with public interest and demands. Highlights include:

- *Black Hawk Ridge:* Currently the ridge top facilities serve as a special events area available by permit. Under this plan the ridge top facilities would be redeveloped and upgraded to a modern day use area open for general public use. The access road would be open to the public, except during ice/snow conditions.
- *Mazomanie:* This 2,000 plus acre area extends from the Mazomanie beach on the river shoreline to CTH Y on the east. Recreational opportunities for hiking and day use activities will be substantially expanded in this area. Included will be a rustic day use area, new boat access site, and beach area facilities. A hiking trail link will connect to Dane County's Walking Iron Park near Mazomanie. The dog trial area and use here would remain largely unchanged.
- *Boating and river camping:* Current "on river" recreation will be maintained. The plan calls for improvements at a number of DNR managed boat landings. Sandbar camping continues unchanged, and two new on-shore water-access-only campgrounds are proposed at down-river locations.
- *Equestrian Use:* The Millville horse trails will be expanded from the current five miles to about 15 miles. With the proposed addition of an equestrian campground as well.
- *Winter biking:* The revised master plan includes a recommendation to allow winter bike riding, particularly with "fat tire bikes", on the equestrian trails including Black Hawk Ridge and Millville (about 14 miles total existing trail).
- *Hunting and trapping:* The plan maintains and improves game habitat and hunting opportunities, particularly opportunities for deer, turkey and pheasant hunting. There will be improvements in hunter access, including opportunities for hunters with mobility impairments.
- *ADA access:* Many actions in the plan will provide expanded opportunities for less mobile persons to enjoy the outdoors, such as accessible hunting/wildlife viewing blinds.
- *Interpretation and education:* On-site interpretive trails at several effigy mound sites are planned as well as improvements to the Wisconsin Heights Battlefield.
- *Satellite day use/wildlife watching sites:* Small lightly-developed day use areas and wildlife viewing sites will be developed at various locations along the length of the Riverway.

Recommendation

The department recommends NRB approval of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis.

Overview of Real Estate Recommendations for the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway

**These changes are outlined in the Draft Master Plan on the Real Estate Action Items map.*

Property	Existing Project Boundary (Acres)	Proposed Project Boundary (Acres)	Changes in Project Boundary (Acres)	Existing Acquisition Goal (Acres)	Proposed Acquisition Goal (Acres)	Changes in Acquisition Goal (Acres)	Percent Complete	Parcel Redesignations (Acres)	Proposed Land Sale (Acres)
Lower Wisconsin State Riverway	95,103	95,893	790	78,855	78,855	0	64%	0	34
Tower Hill State Park	76.5	76.5	0	76.5	76.5	0	100%	0	0
<i>totals</i>	<i>95,180</i>	<i>95,970</i>	<i>790</i>	<i>78,932</i>	<i>78,932</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>	<i>34</i>