

14. Outdoor recreational participation and facilities

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Forest-based recreation plays an important role in people's lives. Many family traditions depend on forest based opportunities like hunting. Wisconsin's growing human population will potentially increase demand for additional recreation lands and facilities. Tourism and forest management are mainstays to local economies. On an annual basis, forest-based recreationists spent approximately \$2.5 billion within Wisconsin communities (Marcouiller and Mace, 1999). This spending stimulates the economy further and it is estimated that forest-based recreation is a \$5.5 billion industry (WEDI, 2004).

Wisconsin's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is the most extensive, long-term data available to assess statewide recreation demand and supply. SCORP is conducted every five years, and the 2005-2010 SCORP provides the majority of data presented here. It measures all types of outdoor recreation activities in all settings (rural and urban) and habitats, not only forests. This section focuses on activities and facilities that typically occur in forest settings but it is not possible to specifically sort data just by land cover. SCORP divides the state into eight regions of roughly the same geographic size that represents different demographic trends, tourism influences, and environment types. For more detailed discussions on recreation trends and analysis, please see the full SCORP report.

14.1 Participation in Outdoor Recreation

Wisconsin's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan data provides days of participant activity for 95 outdoor recreation activities. Increases or decreases in these measures indicate a change in capacity (facilities or access to lands) and public demand. Participation rates indicate the size of the market for activities and demand for related services, facilities, equipment, and land. Societal welfare and the health of the economy are linked to satisfying the demands for outdoor activities. Later in this section, the supply side of recreational facilities (infrastructure, trails, campgrounds, land) are discussed and compared to the amount of participation.

Sports and activities evolve; for example, ten years ago very few people had ever heard of geocaching. The 2005 - 2010 SCORP refined broad categories to capture such transformations. Because data collection methods were changed, comparing participation rates within the same year is slightly more accurate than across years.

Table 14.a includes a sample of the 95 total recreation activities that SCORP tracks. These activities represent the type of recreation that is generally available on public and private forest land. The percent of people who participated in each activity from the 1999 and 2005-2010 SCORP reports are shown. The 2005-2010 SCORP report projected recreation trends in 2010 compared to 2005, presented in the right column.

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Table 14.a: Wisconsin Resident Past, Present and Future Participation Trends

Activity	1999 SCORP* Percent of Participation	2005-2010 SCORP** Percent of Participation	2010 SCORP Future Participation Trends
Birdwatching	46.4	40.9	Increasing Demand
Camping – Developed or RV Camping	12.9	32.3	Increasing Demand
Camping – Primitive or Tent Camping	25.1	16.0	Stable
Day Hike	41.4	35.0	Stable
Fishing:	47.6	NA	Stable
Freshwater	NA	40.7	NA
Warmwater	NA	37.0	NA
Coldwater	NA	13.9	NA
Ice	NA	11.4	NA
Great Lakes	NA	11.0	NA
Hunting:	23.7	NA	Decreasing Demand
Migratory Birds	NA	5.0	NA
Upland Birds	NA	10.5	NA
Small Game	NA	14.5	NA
Big Game	NA	19.2	NA
Mountain Biking	21.0	NA	Decreasing Demand
Off-road	NA	20.4	NA
Single Track	NA	18.0	NA
Off-road Driving with ATV	12.3	23.4	Increasing Demand
Skiing – Cross Country	14.5	11.4	Stable
Snowmobiling	14.6	18.3	Decreasing Demand
Swimming – Lakes & Streams	61.0	45.8	Stable
Visit Nature Centers	NA	65.3	Stable
Wildlife Viewing	59.5	57.0	Increasing Demand

*SCORP, 1999 Table 8, **SCORP,2006, Table2-1

Source: SCORP 2006

Wisconsin's population grew 4.72% from 2000 to 2008 and outdoor recreation participation is expected to follow suit. The baby boom population is reaching retirement age and will increase demand for appropriate outdoor recreation facilities for the growing aged population. In addition, recreation participation tends to cycle through peaks and valleys which will account for upward or downward demands for a particular activity (SCORP, 2006).

Urban forests and green spaces are of critical importance to the majority of Wisconsin’s population that lives in cities. The benefits of outdoor recreation opportunities close to home for young and old in our health-conscious society are highlighted in many research papers. For the

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mobility impaired or those without transportation to rural forests, urban forests and other urban green spaces might be the only option for outdoor recreation. The most popular activities in urban forests include trail-based activities such as walking and bicycling, picnicking, family gatherings, and visiting nature centers (National Report, 2010).

SCORP reported that developed or RV camping experienced a three fold increase in demand between 1999 and 2005. This is contrasted by a fairly significant decrease in primitive or tent camping. In the past, the private sector in Wisconsin has been more involved in accommodating RV camping than state forests that offer more primitive camping. Although public forests have been adjusting by installing electrical hook-ups and other facilities to support developed camping, stakeholders may demand more. Due to changing RV markets, however, land managers may need additional research before making major infrastructure changes to support additional RV camping.

The full outlook is clouded, however, by the impact of rising fuel costs and changing spending patterns from a slowing economy. Recent economic reports indicate a collapse in RV sales with many RV manufacturers going out of business. RV manufacturers expect to ship just 14,100 units in 2009, the lowest in 38 years of data collection. RV production is down 50 percent from 28,300 shipped in 2008 and down 80 percent from 71,800 vehicles it shipped in 2004 (Rueters 2009).

Off-road driving with an ATV showed an upward trend since the 1999 SCORP and it is expected to keep increasing through 2010. A third of residents in six out of the eight SCORP regions operate ATVs. Only the most urban Lower Lake Michigan Coastal and Southern Gateways regions with the least amount of undeveloped land and trails have lower participation rates around 15%. Initially, it was thought that participation would level off as it did with snowmobiling. One argument for continued increase is that ATVs can be used year-round while snowmobiles are limited to only a few months out of the year. The recent introduction of off-road side-by-side vehicles (rugged and versatile, golf-cart-like vehicles) may require future changes in mechanized-use trails if they become popular.

14.2 Lands Open to Public Recreation

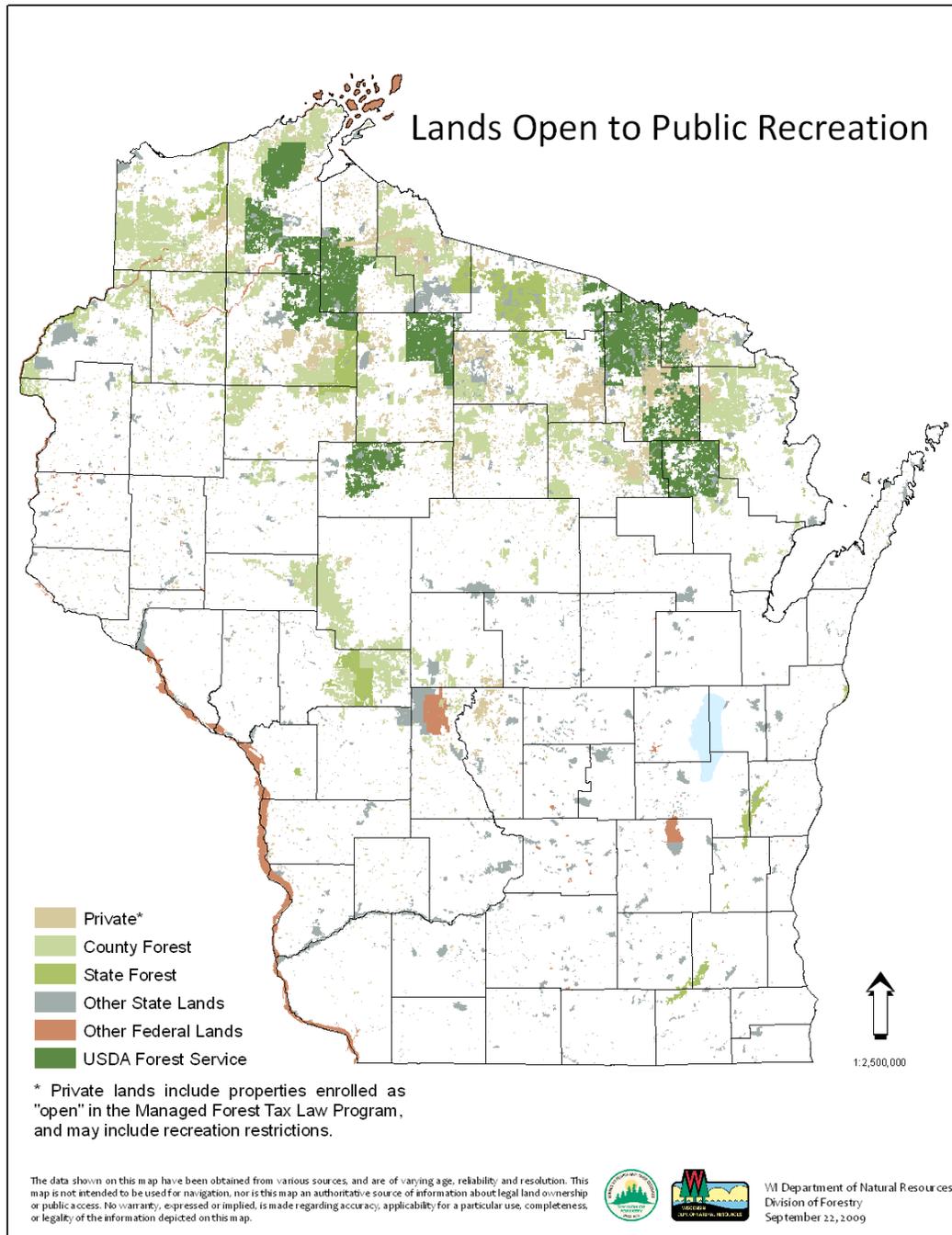
An adequate supply of public and private land and the facilities or infrastructure (e.g. boat landings, snowmobile rental businesses) to support growing recreational demand is important. Trails and campgrounds will be discussed in more detail as they support a variety of outdoor activities and have direct bearing on local economies.

Table 14b: Public recreational lands		
Ownership	Acres	Percent
Municipal parks	62,004	1%
County lands	2,594,625	45%
State lands	1,366,692	23%
Federal lands	1,795,030	31%
Total	5,782,353	
Source: SCORP, 2006, Table D-1		

As the population grows and communities expand, land is an important resource to provide recreation opportunities. Significant sectors of the state economy are dependent on growing recreation markets, and readily available lands are essential for that growth. Of the 5,782,353 total acres of public lands available for recreation, 45% of it is

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owned by counties, 31% by the federal government, and 24% by the state. City, town, and village parks account for 1%.



Map 14.a: Lands open to public recreation (Source: DNR, 2009)

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Some private forest lands are open to public recreation. Property that is enrolled in Wisconsin's forest tax laws, the Managed Forest Law (MFL) and the Forest Crop Law (FCL) may be open to some public recreation if the landowner designates it. (See Criterion 7, Indicator 19 for a discussion of these programs). If the landowner chooses to allow public access to their forest for recreation uses, the tax incentive is greater than if they close the property to access. MFL properties allow hunting, fishing, sight-seeing, and cross-country skiing. FCL land is open for hunting and fishing only. Most industrial forest land in Wisconsin is enrolled in these programs and provides access, although most likely with restrictions.

Less private land is open to public hunting as more private landowners elect to close their land in response to use conflicts. Since a statute change in 1997, it is also no longer necessary to post "No Trespassing" signs unless a private tract is surrounded by or borders public land like a national forest, state wildlife management area, or county park (Wisconsin State Statute 943.13 1997). Using the Managed Forest Law program as a measure of changing tolerance toward public access, overall closed acreage increased from 39% to 62% of MFL land between 1999 and 2009. The change was less dramatic (from 70% to 82%) for small private MFL landowners in the same time period (see Criterion 6, Indicator 16.6).

These shifts could result in more use pressure on public lands. Use conflicts that grow out of a shortage of available hunting lands could be further exacerbated by a 2007 statute change prohibiting hunting leases on closed MFL land. Manipulation of a loophole in MFL regulations by a few large landowners who close thousands of acres to public access drew the ire of the State Legislature. Since the large landowners were closing public access in part to sell hunting leases, the Legislature added a provision to the 2007 State Budget Bill to prohibit leasing MFL land. That caught many small landowners with outstanding hunting leases by surprise. Controversies over MFL public access and leasing issues were still unresolved in 2009.

To counter the trend to close more MFL land to public access, the state enacted 2007 Act 20 to provide \$1,000,000 annually for an Outdoor Activities Grant Program. The funding originates from a closed-area fee paid by MFL participants and was intended for acquiring easements or purchasing land for approved outdoor recreational activities. A severe \$6.6 billion budget shortfall, however, caused the state to delete funding for the Outdoor Activities Grant Program in the 2009-11 biennial budget. While the budget eliminates funding in the 2009-11 biennium, statutory authority for the program remains (Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau 2009).

14.3 Recreational facilities on public lands

This metric shows the degree to which forest recreation capacity is meeting the needs of the population. Having forest land open for outdoor recreation is important, and it is essential that facilities are provided for a wide range of activities and physical abilities for young and old alike.

Recreation demand and recreation supply are unique elements built on different units of measures. Where recreation demand is largely based on existing and potential visitor numbers, recreation supply represents physical resources. Unfortunately, there is no data source that tracks the number or type of facilities on public land.

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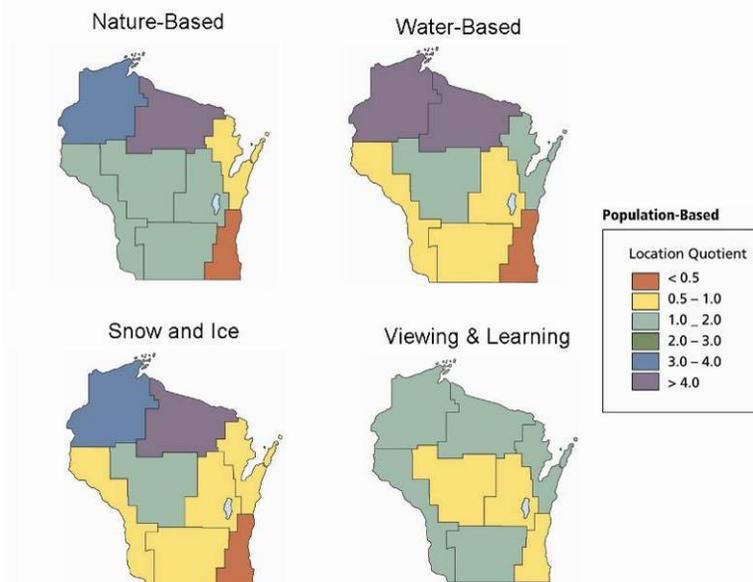
SCORP developed a descriptive typology to assess the relative abundance and scarcity of recreational resources in a given location. Regional forest based recreation evaluated here includes Nature-Based, Water-Based, Snow and Ice, Viewing & Learning categories. (SCORP describes six more types.) Table 14.c lists examples of facilities or activities within each typology. Urban forests are included in this supply analysis.

Nature-Based	State Parks, forested lands, wildlife areas
Water-Based	beaches, boat launches, fishing piers
Viewing and Learning	nature centers, Rustic Roads, historic places
Snow and Ice	ski, snowmobile and winter trails
Source: SCORP, 2006, Table 5-4	

Map 14.b presents the relative supply of recreation by type for each of Wisconsin's eight SCORP regions based on population. (For the relative supply based on area, see 2005-2010 SCORP Figure 5-3.) Regions with a low location quotient do not supply a sufficient amount for their population relative to the rest of the state.

Results from the 2005-2010 SCORP suggest that in general, highly populated regions have high demand for outdoor recreation but do not provide opportunities in proportion to their population. Northern regions have comparatively abundant opportunities relative to their low populations.

Relative Supply of Recreation by Type



Map 14.b: Relative supply of recreation by type

Source: Adapted SCORP, 2006, figure 5-2

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Great Northwest	campgrounds, parks, trails – ATV, cross-country ski, dogsled, hiking, horseback riding, off-road truck and motorcycle, snowmobile, water, snowshoe & road biking
Northwoods	electrical campsites, parks, trails – inline skating
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	non-electrical campsites, parks, trails – cross-country ski, hiking, horseback riding, & mountain biking
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	campgrounds, parks, wildlife areas, trails – ATV, mountain biking, off-road motorcycle, off-road truck, water
Southern Gateways	backcountry camping, carry-in boat launches, natural areas, parks, public water access, trails – hiking, horseback riding, road biking
Mississippi River Corridor	carry-in boat launches, parks, ATV parks, electrical campgrounds, trails – cross-country ski, horseback riding, water, ATV
Western Sands	parks, nature centers, fishing piers
Lake Winnebago Waters	carry-in boat launches, campgrounds, trails – cross-country ski, mountain biking, snowmobile, road biking
Source: SCORP, 2006, table 5-7	

The Lower Lake Michigan Coastal region has the lowest supply of all types of nature-based recreation. These shortages include boat launches, campgrounds, and parks. There are a variety of trail shortages in this region including ATV and other motorized vehicle trails and water trails (see Table 14.d).

The southwestern part of the state, which is generally made up of the Mississippi River Corridor and Southern Gateways, is another area with limited recreation supply for the level of population (see Table 14.d). Both regions have a lack of parks, natural areas, carry-in boat launches and horseback riding opportunities. More camping opportunities have been identified as a need from the public and both felt the increase in competition for natural resources and public lands were major issues (SCORP, 2006 table-3).

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14.4 Recreational trails

Many of the major recreation activities on forests require the use of trails: hiking, biking, skiing, horseback riding and often hunting. Table 14.e shows that, by far, snowmobile trails are in greatest supply across the state at 18,201 miles. This is roughly ten times more miles compared to each of the other types of trails. Even though this number is great, there are still two regions identified with snowmobile trail shortages for their level of population; the Great Northwest and Lake Winnebago Waters (SCORP, 2006, table 5-7).

Table 14.e: Statewide recreation trails	
Trail	Miles
Off-road truck use	63
Off-road motorcycle use	78
Water use	109
Dogsled use	159
Snowshoe use	550
Mountain biking use	1,016
Single or multipurpose	1,220
Hiking use	1,507
Horseback riding use	1,535
Bicycle use	2,596
ATV (winter) use	3,850
ATV (summer) use	1,177
Cross-country ski use	3,882
Snowmobile use	18,201
Source: SCORP, 2006, Appendix	

SCORP asked the public what their greatest recreational needs were. Table 14.f lists trail types the public thought were needed in their region. Seven out of eight regions have shortages for at least one or more trail types (SCORP table 5-7). The public feels there is a need across the whole state for more hiking trails. There is also a great need from five out of eight regions for more biking and horse trails.

At times, the public identified a need that SCORP did not find was a supply shortage. Table 14.4b identifies the need for hiking trails across all regions, but in the supply shortage analysis, only three regions lacked hiking trails. This may reflect the lack of knowledge on where to find hiking trails and so the public perceives a supply shortage or the public desires a greater amount than exists in their region.

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Table 14.f: Public perspectives on top trail needs

	Great Northwest	Northwoods	Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	Southern Gateway	Miss. River Corridor	Western Sands	Lake Winnebago Waters
More ATV usage opportunities					X			
More Biking Trails		X	X	X	X		X	
More Hiking Trails	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
More Horse Trails				X	X	X	X	X
More Mountain Biking Trails				X				X
More Trails (all types)							X	

Source: SCORP, 2006 table 5-3

Another difference between the public’s perspective and the SCORP supply shortage analysis regards ATV trails. Only the Southern Gateway region felt there needed to be more ATV usage opportunities in their region, yet SCORP found four regions with a shortage of ATV opportunities compared to other areas of the state. This may mean that the public feels the amount of opportunities in their area is sufficient, even though it may be less than other areas.

ATV trails and access routes play an important roll in the popularity of this sport. Many regional trail networks require an agreement between both public and private land owners. As of 2007, there are nearly 2,000 miles of public summer ATV trails and over 4,000 miles of public winter ATV trails. These milage totals are not the actual miles of trail available, but miles open by seasonal use. There are some trails that over-lap in seasonal use. Additionally, these numbers change annually and are nearly impossible to track because many towns frequently change their local ordinances allowing ATV use. (excerpted from: All Terrain Vehicles in Wisconsin: Summary of ATV Use, Opportunities, Funding and Recent Actions and Response to Natural Resource Board Questions. September, 2007)

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14.g: ATV trail miles by ownership type	
Land Ownership	Miles
State Trails	318
State Properties with Trails	143
Local, County and Federal	Over 1,500
Private Land	Aproximatly 700 acres
Source: All Terrain Vehicles in Wisconsin: Summary of ATV Use, Opportunities, Funding and Recent Actions and Response to Natural Resource Board Questions. September, 2007	

Funding for trails and user conflicts are two of the greatest issues affecting the sustainability of recreation trails. Trail development, maintenance, and management is expensive and time consuming for governments. Due to the current status of both state and federal budgets, the building, repairing, and up-keep of trails are of great concern. Dedicated funding sources and active user groups have shown to support the stability and growth of snowmobile and ATV trails.

Trail use conflict occurs when the goal of one recreation participant interferes with the goals of another recreational participant at the same location or because of differences in social values. This conflict is often asymmetrical, meaning that one user group is generally more impacted by the conflict than the other. Asymmetrical conflict is most likely to occur between motorized and non-motorized recreation activities than between either two motorized or two non-motorized activities (SCORP, 2006). Resolving user conflict regarding where activities are allowed can be a contentious and lengthy resolution process. Not only do local users care about issues like this, so do citizens from around the state that visit these forests.

14.5 Number of campgrounds

Camping is one of the top twenty recreation activities Wisconsinites enjoy. 32.3% of the state campers use developed campsites and 16% use primitive camping spots. Camping supply, including all types of camping, was identified as a shortage in seven out of the eight SCORP regions (SCORP table 5-7). Statewide, there are more electric campsites (13,428) than non-electric (9,248) The Northwoods and the Mississippi River Corridor specifically identified a shortage of electrical sites and only the Upper Lake Michigan Coastal identified a shortage in non-electrical sites. The other regions only identified the need for campgrounds in general and did not specify electric vs. non-electric.

Unless fuel prices and economic changes continue to transform the market, demand for RV camping is expected to increase due to the aging baby boom population. Tent camping, which generally refers to non-electric campsites is expected to remain stable but may loose ground with the growing RV trend. (SCORP tables 5-3 & 6-3). Across most of the state, the public feels more camping opportunities are needed (SCORP table 5-3). The demand for specifically electric sites is needed in the Upper and Lower Lake Michigan Coastal regions (Figure 14.c).

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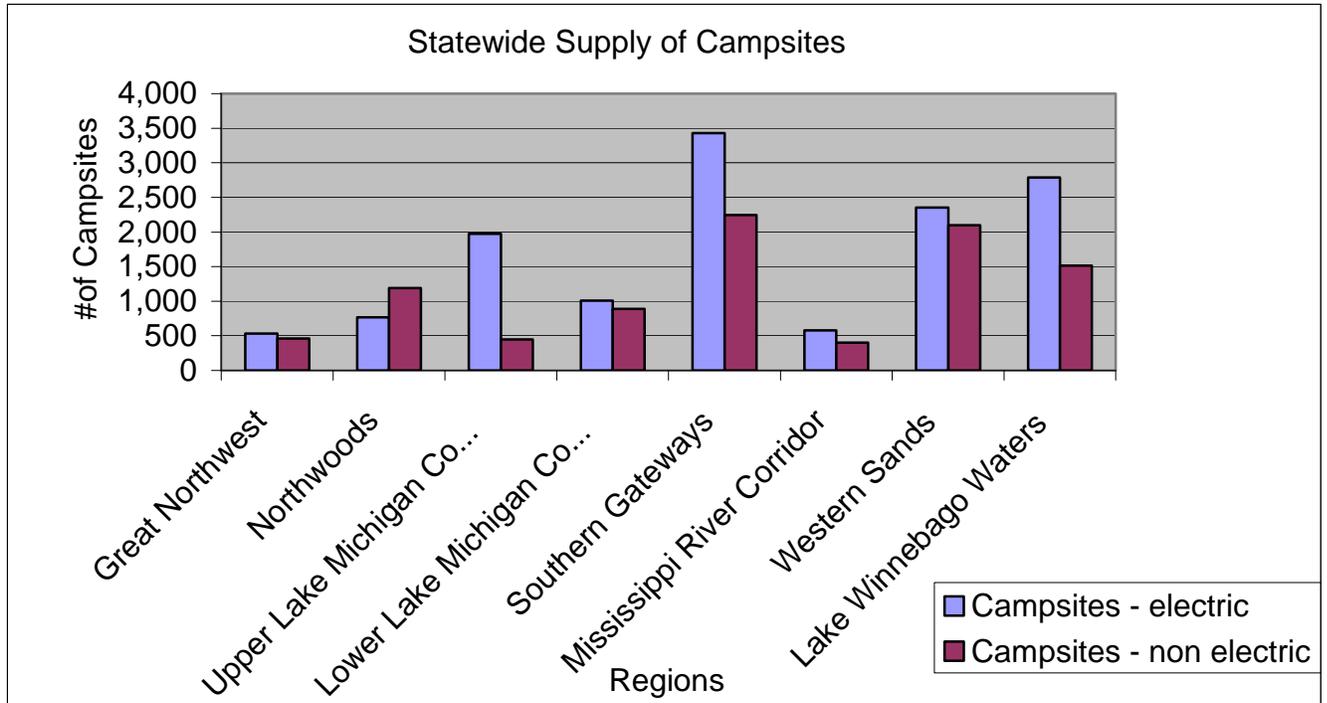


Figure 14.c: Statewide supply of campsites (SCORP, 2006)

	More Camping Opportunities	More Electric Campsites
Great Northwest		
Northwoods		
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal		X
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	X	X
Southern Gateway	X	
Miss. River Corridor		
	X	
Western Sands	X	
Lake Winnebago Waters	X	
Source: SCORP, 2006, Table 5-3		

Both public and private enterprises provide camping opportunities, each with their own niche. Public land is the major provider for a rustic camping experience and trends show that campers

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are moving away from rustic towards more developed campgrounds. This is adding pressure for public forests to provide more of this type of experience.

Campgrounds on state-owned land are extremely popular and the supply of desirable campgrounds is not meeting the need. State forests, along with state parks have campgrounds listed on a national reservation system website that allows people to make reservations up to 11 months in advance. Some of the more popular campgrounds sites are often booked within a few weeks of them becoming available.

Camping supply issues on state forests are addressed during each property's master planning process. State Parks released their 2008 strategic plan in which they identify one of their goals as, "Expand the quality & quantity of sustainable, nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities and facilities available to Wisconsin State Park visitors." To accomplish this they list as one of their action strategies to identify existing and future camping needs and opportunities such as camper cabins, Adirondack shelters, backpack campsites, walk-in campsites, tent and group sites as well as RV campsites.

Conclusion

As individuals and families engage in outdoor recreation, they tend to support protecting and managing forests for multiple purposes including a wide range of recreation types (National Report on Sustainable Forests, 2010). Outdoor recreation is generally increasing across the country, but the increase is much greater for certain types of recreation. A few types of recreation are actually decreasing in use and demand. Across the nation, the number of recreation days in forest settings increased by 25% between 2000 and 2007 but the number and capacity of recreation sites and capacities have remained constant or increased slightly (National Report on Sustainable Forests, 2010).

The recreational issues and trends of most concern are:

Trails -

Walking for pleasure is the most popular activity in the state. It is not surprising the public feels there is a need across the whole state for more hiking trails.

Camping –

Across most of the state, the public feels more developed camping opportunities are needed, but collapsing RV sales prompt cautious analysis. Primitive or tent-camping was predicted to remain fairly stable through 2010. Campgrounds on state-owned land are extremely popular and the supply of desirable campgrounds is not meeting the need. This will have a direct effect for camping offered on state forests as the majority of campgrounds fall into the primitive camping category

User conflict –

Resolving user conflict regarding where activities are allowed can be a contentious and lengthy resolution process

Open land –

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Based on experience with MFL and changes in state trespass laws, private landowners are allowing less public access to their property. A statute change in 2007 that prohibits leasing of closed MFL land is also restricting the supply of private land available for hunting leases.

New demographics –

The baby boom population is reaching retirement age and will increase demand for a number of more passive recreational activities.

15. Investments in forest health, management, research, education, and wood processing

15.1 Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA S&PF) funding

The metric presents the amount of USDA Forest Service - Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry (NA S&PF) funding to partners in Wisconsin. This type of funding is a direct measure of federal investment in Wisconsin forests and the forest products industry. The mission of the NA S&PF program is to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners, state agencies, tribes, and community resource managers to help sustain the nation's urban and rural forests and to protect communities and the environment from fires, insects, disease, and invasive plants (USDA Forest Service, 2007). NA S&PF funding is roughly 5% of the Division of Forestry's total budget.

In 2008, the U.S. Forest Service began implementing a "[Redesigned](#)" S&PF program. The S&PF Redesign assumes that our collective efforts will be most effective if available resources are focused on issues and landscapes of national importance and prioritized, using state and regional assessments, on activities that promise meaningful outcomes on the ground. The Redesign Board of Directors identified "competitive resource allocation" as an effective means of ensuring that federal S&PF dollars are invested in the most important activities.

Beginning in federal fiscal year 2008, 15% of the S&PF allocation to states was invested in projects selected through a competitive process. This competitive process is administered through a joint effort between the state forestry agencies and USFS leadership. The DNR Forestry Division manages the development and submission of proposals in Wisconsin, screening competitive proposals that typically exceed available allotments by a very wide margin.

Figures 15.a and 15.b show the level of grants in 2005 through 2008 and the dollar amounts awarded in the six tracking categories in 2008. An average of \$5,261,707 was received in grants annually over the four-year period. The amount of funding awarded to each category has been relatively consistent with the exception of the Forest Legacy program, used to purchase forest land or conservation easements. Funding for Legacy acquisitions is the most sensitive as projects compete nationally for limited funds.