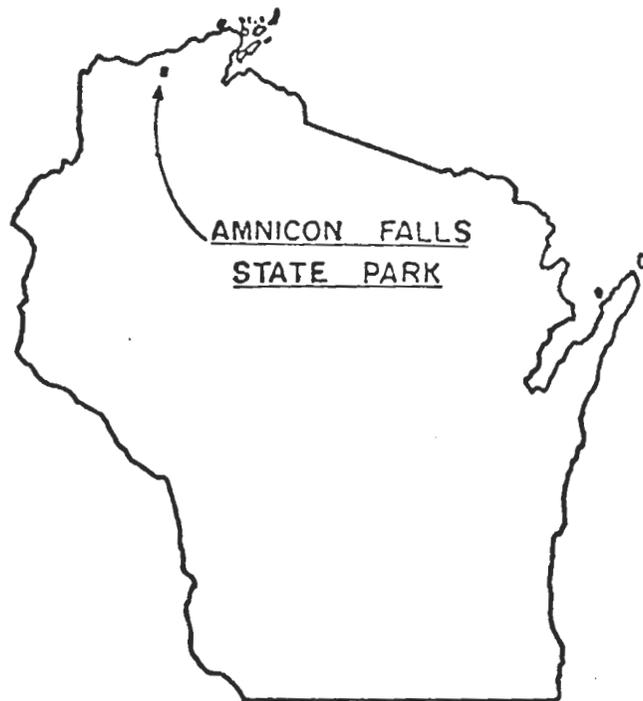


CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN FOR AMNICON FALLS STATE PARK



Assigned Planner or Property Task Force  
Goals & Objectives Approved by Natural  
Resources Board  
Conceptual Plan Reviewed by Natural  
Resources Board

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AMNICON FALLS STATE PARK  
MASTER PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Construction of recreational facilities for the original 70-acre Amnicon Park, known then as Bardon Park, began in 1930. An old road bridge was located just north of the falls by the Douglas County and Town of Amnicon work crews. A well and a ball field were also located at this time in the present campground area.

Prior to this construction a sandstone quarry had been in operation in the park from 1885 to about 1914. Sandstone from this quarry was used to construct many buildings in Superior, Wisconsin, including the present Douglas County museum.

Gravel was taken from the park during the 1930's, and money from its sale was used for park improvement.

In 1939 the CCC's built the first cover on the present covered bridge. Electric service was extended to the bridge, and dances were held here for many years. Two other foot bridges were constructed by the CCC's on the west side of the island. A swimming pond was also constructed prior to the state's acquiring the park.

In 1961 Douglas County donated Amnicon Park to the state. At this time the park consisted of approximately 165 acres. Since then 520 acres have been acquired from the Town of Amnicon and remaining parcels from private individuals, bringing the present acreage total to 816.06. Attendance for 1974 was 58,432 with 5,060 being overnight campers.

The information presented in this plan will serve as guidelines for park development for the next ten years.

Goals and Objectives

1. Property goal: To provide a public recreation area and to conserve and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the property.
2. Objectives
  - a. To ultimately provide for a total of 100,000 visits annually.
    1. Picnicking day-use facilities (65,000)
    2. Nature study (5,000)
    3. Hiking (5,000)
    4. Contiguous winter sports trails by allowing trail corridors for snowmobiles, cross-country skiing and other winter sports (10,000)
    5. Camping (15,000)
  - b. Provide for a program of replacing pathologically over mature aspen with a mixture of suitable tree species. The aspen area is now being taken over by dense stands of tag alder.
  - c. Preserve the scenic and aesthetic qualities of the Amnicon River within the park boundaries.
  - d. Maintain a warm water fishery for walleye, burbot, smelt and other less common species in the Amnicon River.
  - e. Maintain 95% of the park lands or approximately 780 acres in a natural or undeveloped condition.

II. CONCEPTS

The concepts will reiterate the present achievements and serve as guidelines for future development of the park.

1. Park Entrance

It is proposed that a contact station and new entrance road with direct access to the park from U.S. Highway 2 be developed. This entrance would allow more room for traffic backup and a smooth passage of traffic into and out of the park.



Parking for day use visitors will be made available at the existing entrance location in greater quantity when the proposed entrance is constructed. Some parking will be available immediately. Increased day use parking facilities are not a requirement at this time, but the need may arise in the future.

A majority of use at Amnicon Falls is day use and is expected to remain that way. Length of stay for many campers is usually one night and the seasonal use is spread over the week days and not crowded into the weekends.

## 2. Parking

The existing 35-car parking lot adjacent to the covered bridge and the five smaller lots (24 cars) along the river have been considered as an unnecessary encroachment on the aesthetics of the area. The parking lots and associated picnic areas are attractions which have created concentrations of users, resulting in compaction and erosion of the surrounding area. In an effort to conserve the area, the parking lots will be removed and additional parking provided in the present contact area.

## 3. Day-Use

All picnic tables and grills have been removed from the island as a first step in correcting the erosion and compaction that has taken place. For the same reasons all tables and grills should be removed in the area between the river and the existing 35-car parking lot. Use on the island will be restricted to a well-defined hiking trail with fenced lookouts.

## 4. Swimming

Swimming at Amnicon Falls Park has always been popular, both in the Amnicon River and until 1965 in a man-made wading pond. The wading pond was developed by constructing a small concrete dam across an old river channel that now has an intermittent drainage. Water was supplied to the pond by diverting part of the Amnicon River. The only safeguard against contamination was a continuous flow of river water through the pond. Reductions in the normal flow of water during the summer months resulted in stagnation of the water, which created a potential health problem, and for this reason the pond was drained.

Engineering studies do not recommend renovation of the wading pond because of the impossibility of meeting stringent state code requirements. Conventional pools are costly and probably would not be approved under present Natural Resources Board policy. A dug swimming pond would have the same potential algae problem plus the difficulty of insufficient area for parking and supporting public facilities according to engineering observations. It is also their recommendation that the old pool structures be removed.

Swimming in the Amnicon River, including diving from any ledge, rock or other object, will be prohibited. This authority is conferred by Section 27.01 (2) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

## 5. Trails

The existing hiking trail on the west side of the Amnicon River should be redeveloped into a self-guided nature trail.

Snowmobile traffic from east of the park should be routed through the existing entrance. The snowmobile route should use the park road system where feasible. All snowmobile trail construction and maintenance should be the direct responsibility of the agency requesting the trail and not the DNR.

With the growing demand for cross-country ski trails, consideration should be given to establishing several trails of various lengths east of the Amnicon River.

## 6. Camping

Present camping facilities consist of a 40-unit tent-trailer campground. A need for additional campsites is not anticipated at this time.

Back-pack camping facilities will not be provided. Most of the undeveloped portion of the park is covered with scattered aspen over brush and sedges. This area is usually poorly drained and not suited for back-pack camping. Maintenance of summer



trails and campsites in this area would be excessive. Amnicon Park does not offer the amount of undeveloped land that may be found in the Brule River State Forest or Pattison State Park or the national forests in the area.

#### 7. Wildlife

An intensive game management program will not be conducted within the park as hunting in state parks, other than the deer hunting at selected parks, is contrary to state statute. Game habitat protection or development will be largely a secondary benefit of other management programs in the remaining areas of the park.

An experimental fish management area will be developed in the old sandstone quarry. Rainbow trout will be planted in this area. If the trout can adapt to this environment, the quarry will be opened for fishing.

#### 8. Water Resources

The only major water resource is the Amnicon River which flows through the entire length of the park. The river is subject to sudden increases in flow at any time of the year due to the excessive runoff from the red clay soil. It supports a warmwater fishery of walleye and other assorted game and forage fish species. It also provides an excellent run of walleye, smelt and burbot from Lake Superior.

#### 9. Vegetation

Large areas of the park consist of an aspen-alder combination. Approximately 400 acres of the park contains overmature aspen which will convert to alder as the aspen dies. Efforts will be made to reduce the take-over by alder and convert most of the park to a more desirable mixture of conifers and hardwoods which were typical of the area prior to 1900. However, some aspen will be retained.

The aspen-alder combination is present in both the intensively and extensively developed areas of the park. For this reason two separate management techniques will be employed. Trees from the following list will be used at the managers discretion in both areas.

- Basswood
- White Cedar
- White Spruce
- Hemlock
- Red Maple
- White Pine
- Native Larch

In the intensively developed areas of the park, aspen stands will be converted by underplanting the above species. Cutting of aspen will be restricted to dead and diseased trees which present a potential hazard to park visitors. Underplanting in this area should be completed within four years.

In the extensively developed areas of the park the aspen will be harvested prior to planting of the more desirable long-term species. A number of cutting areas ranging in size from 50-75 acres over a 6-8 year period should be sufficient to remove those portions of the over mature aspen. Each cutting area will be planted immediately following the disposal or any postsale treatment recommended by the property manager. Approximately 300-500 trees/acre with the species mixed will be planted in these parts of the park. Natural openings will not be planted.

All planting in the park will be hand planting on a random basis.

### III. DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. Park Entrance

The proposal is the development of a new entrance from U.S. Highway 2. Acquisition of 8.05 acres, owned by Harding and Helen Christenson, outside the park boundary is required. An additional 2.44 acres owned by Elizabeth and Olai Thompson should also be acquired to give the state ownership on both sides of the Amnicon River.



Approval must also be obtained from the Burlington Northern Railroad and the Public Service Commission for a railroad crossing for the entrance road.

Two taller telephone poles are also required to raise wires above the new entrance road.

The Department of Transportation District Office at Superior has no objections to the proposed relocation of the entrance road. However, the DOT would prefer the project be delayed until U.S. Highway 2 is relocated south of its present location. Road construction for the project will consist of approximately 1,050 feet of two-lane road and 600 feet of one-lane road plus parking for car-trailer units and employees. In addition 550 feet of two-lane road at the existing entrance would have to be removed. Development of this entrance should begin within five years.

Additional services required at the contact station consist of electric and telephone. These utilities should enter the park underground from the existing lines on County Highway "U".

## 2. Parking

Removing the 35-car parking lot and the five smaller lots will require stopping visitor traffic near the present park entrance. (See site plan.) The blacktop road will be gated and used as a pedestrian walk and service road. The former parking areas will be converted to picnic sites. Trees and grass will be reestablished in these areas. Parking will be provided in the parking area associated with the present entrance area. A future increase in picnic or day-use facilities may require additional parking. If additional parking is required, it could be added to the existing 20-car lot on the west side of the river.

## 3. Trails

The trail is shown on the master plan sheet attached.

A 400-foot segment of the trail on the west side of the Amnicon River is routed on the service road to the pumphouse and future garage site. Trail will be routed away from pumphouse and garage site in immediate area of these facilities.

On hillsides it may be necessary to construct steps or short ramps to prevent erosion of the red clay. Surfacing such as crushed gravel may also be required where ground seepage keeps the surface continuously damp.

## 4. Service Area

A new shop/storage building is planned near the pumphouse. The 24' x 26' garage will serve as storage for park trucks, power tools, supplies, etc. It is planned that the building will have electric service. Water for washing trucks or sanitary purposes cannot be extended to the garage until a successful percolation test has been made in the area.

## IV. ACQUISITION

At the present 816.06 acres are state owned within the park boundary meeting the 816.06 acreage goal. It is proposed that the following tracts be acquired and the acreage goal increased by 10.49 acres to 826.55 acres:

1. Christenson tract - 8.05 acres - estimated cost \$5,500.
  2. Thompson tract - 2.44 acres - estimated cost \$1,500.
- Total - \$7,000.

Total acquisition cost as of 12/31/74 is \$18,555.

## V. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

1. Continue present level of management.
2. Provide more intensive recreation facilities than presently exist.
3. Reduce use and revert to wild or wilderness status.



2. Remove only the 35-car parking lot:

Removing only the 35-car parking lot would not remove the parking and resultant congestion from the river edge. The purpose of removing the six parking lots from the river edge is to reduce vehicle congestion and spread out use. Visitors tend to congregate around the parking lots which results in over use of only a small portion of the picnic area, while some areas receive little to no use at all.

3. Keep the existing entrance:

As day-use visitors increase, parking areas will have to be expanded. The area of the present entrance could best serve the east side of the river.

A problem of increasing concern is traffic control at the park entrance. During peak weekends, congestion created by the sale of park stickers backs traffic up the short entrance road and occasionally onto County Trunk Highway "U". A constant problem is the short sight distance at the junction of CTH "U" and the park entrance road.

VI. DEVELOPMENT COSTS

1. Existing

Total development cost since date of establishment	\$83,787
Present value of all park buildings	42,415

2. Proposed

PHASE I

Enlarge parking area at parking entrance using space available	\$1,000
Obliterate 35-car parking lot	500
Obliterate 5 parking lots	1,000
Construct wood sales parking area	300
Manager's projects	3,000
	<u>\$5,800</u>

PHASE II

Construct 2,300 feet of nature trail (Includes trail construction, split rail fence, steps and railings as required, interpretive markers and signing.)	\$ 6,000
Construct 4 miles of cross-country ski trail (Includes signing)	2,500
(a) Entrance sign	250
Manager's projects	3,000
B.T. surfacing or entrance road (county estimate)	4,000
	<u>\$15,750</u>

PHASE III

Railroad Crossing - signals and raise powerline (No automatic signals required)	\$ 1,500
Move present pavs & addition (if required)	3,500
Construct new entrance road - F.A.*	12,500
Enlarge parking	2,500
Manager's projects	3,000
	<u>\$23,000</u>

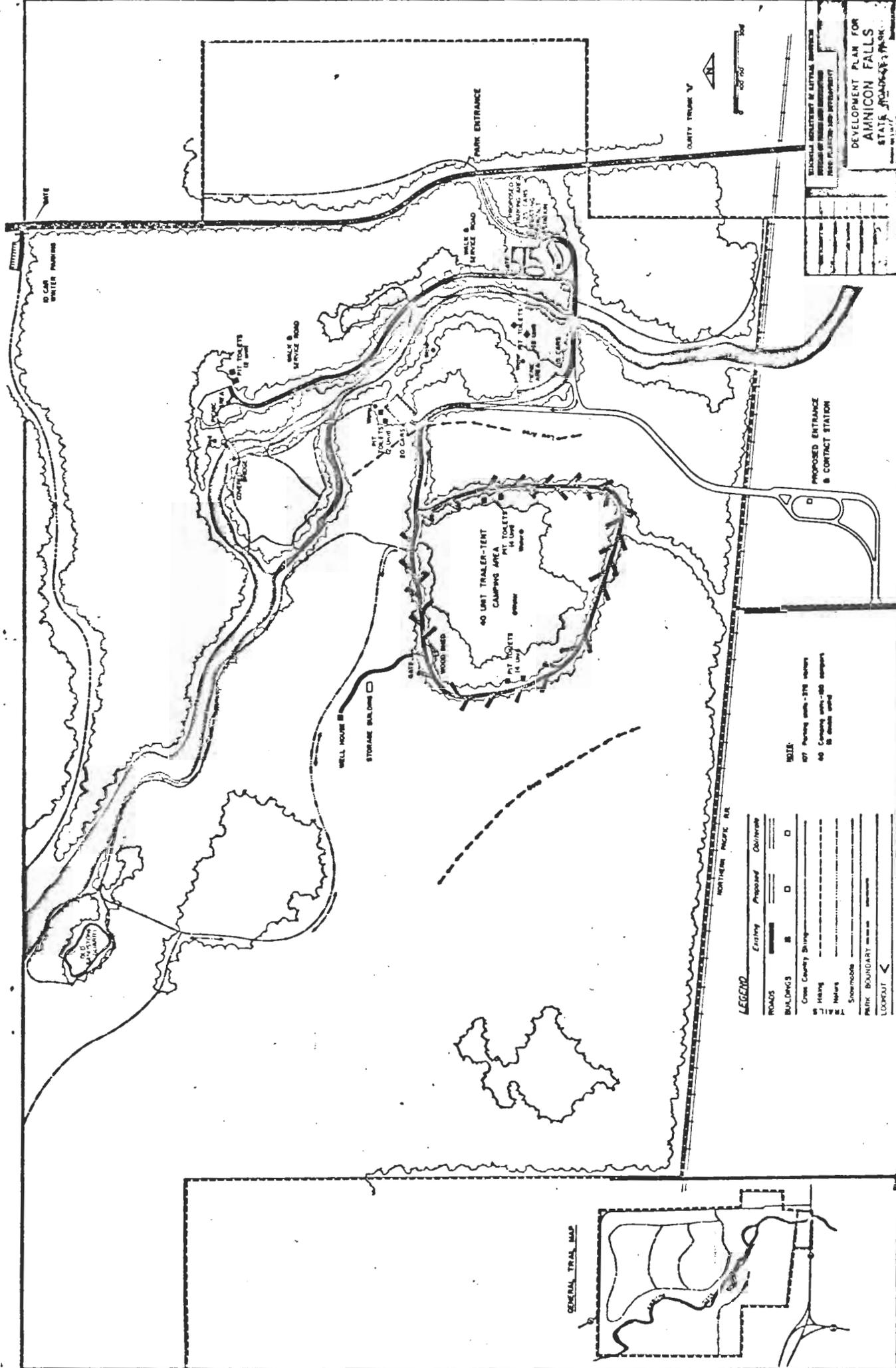
GRAND TOTAL (Development)	\$44,550
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VII. MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The person responsible for implementation of the master plan will be the ranger stationed at Brule.

\* The proposal for a new entrance is a long-term proposal and is subject to availability of funds and engineering studies.





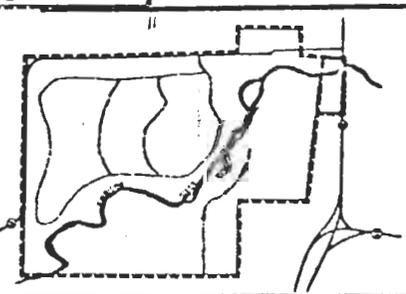
DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR  
**AMNICON FALLS**  
 STATE PARK

**LEGEND**

ROADS	Existing	Proposed	Outline
BUILDINGS	■	□	□
Clear County Shrub	—	—	—
Hiking	—	—	—
Motor	—	—	—
Swimable	—	—	—
PARK BOUNDARY	—	—	—
LOOKOUT	◀	—	—

**NOTE:**  
 277 Parking with 278 visitors  
 40 Camping with 100 campers  
 14 mobile units

GENERAL TRAIL MAP



STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION OF LITERARY SERVICES  
 DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
 STATE OF WISCONSIN  
 1965 PL 123-123-123-123  
 DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR  
**AMNICON FALLS**  
 STATE PARK  
 1965 PL 123-123-123-123

