

Public hearing: Sept. 10, 2015

Donna Stehling

Sauk County Supervisor, District 30, village of Sauk City

Great Sauk Trail Commissioner.

Bluebird trail monitor for Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin

The Badger Lands Trail has 60 houses

I have witnessed proposals for the reuse of the former munitions plant lands since the proposed Super Magnetic Energy Source. As a reporter and editor I attended Klug Commission meetings, Badger Environmental Board of Advisors meetings, Restoration Advisory Board meetings and both the Badger Reuse Committee meetings and sub committee meetings. I covered the towns of Prairie du Sac, Sumpter, Merrimac, West Point and the villages of Merrimac and Prairie du Sac. They participated in a broad community-driven consensus-building process. Consensus was defined as substantial agreement to move forward

At that point in time - August 2000 - U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center had been in operation on the property for 20 years. Having the land and the UW available for co-research projects was important.

Representatives of the Sauk County Conservation Congress stated: "Whereas the BAAP lies on terrain of the former Sauk Prairie and occupies a critical location in the Sauk County landscape, linking Devil's Lake State Park, the Lower Wisconsin River, the Ice Age Trail and Baraboo Hills, and

" Whereas protecting and restoring the natural resources of the state of Wisconsin will benefit ourselves and generations to come,

"Now therefore be it resolved by the Sauk County Division of the Conservation Congress in annual meeting on April 13, 1998 the WDNR should use all means available to acquire the BAAP land for the purpose of managing restoration, preservation and protection. Moreover the lands should be managed to allow public uses such as, but not limited to: hunting, fishing, hiking, biking and cross country skiing."

Roger Shanks submitted this to a vote in 33 Wisconsin counties and was passed 1,036 - 48 statewide.

Badger Reused Committee meetings were packed. Standing room only. Attentive listeners. And people volunteered immediately to work on subcommittees. The goal of committee members, stakeholders, sub-committee members and members of the audience was to develop a consensus-based reuse plan. The Badger Reuse Committee was a diverse group working together as an independent advisory group to develop a common vision based on the interests and needs of the community as well as respecting local, state and federal ordinances and regulations.

Today I can assure you residents of all the municipalities surrounding the former munitions plant have reason to be concerned about what happens to this property. They have dealt with contaminated ground water which meant impacts to private wells, and this includes the village of Prairie du Sac which is not far from the plume. At Kingston Cemetery off Ruthe Badger Road, a red granite gravestone holds the remains of four munitions plant workers. People who were forced to leave their farms still live in the area. People who worked at the plant still live in the area. People new to the area have learned the story.

There are more than 7,000 acres there; property owners include the town of Sumpter (cemeteries), the Sumpter Sanitary District, US Dairy Forage Research Center, the Ho-Chunk Nation and WDNR. All of them participated in the Reuse process along with other federal, state and local stakeholders. They did not compromise. They agreed to come to a consensus. They were thorough, creating a process for proposed reuses that would be measured against the vision and values of the Badger Reuse Plan.

Before the reuse committee even began its work, members were interviewed and all committee members overwhelmingly agreed this land was a special place, its location was unique in the county and because of its location presented unique opportunities for reuse. Most identified conservation of natural, cultural and historical resources collectively as the most important opportunity. Education opportunities were immense, a Recreational parkland with open space was major. The presence of agriculture on that land was important. And some things had to be addressed short-term, but long-term opportunities were important considerations.

They saw the best outcome as a combination of conservation, recreation and agricultural use. Most believed managing the property as a single entity with a select management team (WDNR, Ho-Chunk, USDA, county and local governments) would be an approach.

They wanted no negative impacts to surrounding communities, preservation of conservation ag/exclusive ag zoning, clean water, clean air, clean soil, educational opportunities.

Among the worst outcomes would be land-use decisions made by a vocal minority. They did not want the reuse to contribute to unplanned commercial or residential development or parceling the property. Commercial development was to be encouraged in established business and industrial parks or within city and village main streets.

Clean-up was the major concern. The impacts of chemical contamination remains a concern. Reuses should not contribute more contaminants.

The reuse plan is a broad (well beyond Sauk County) community-accepted roadmap. This broad community represents taxpayers, voters and future voters. Those who worked nine months to create it were dedicated to the land and its people. They had forged a vision with broad community input. The nine values present the community vision for well into the future. Their goal was and still is to heal the land, its people and pass the legacy to future generations.

In late 2002 when the Reuse Plan was agreed upon the WSJ described it as a rare achievement because a spectrum of groups found common ground in planning for the future of the Badger Army Plant site. The reality is from the time the ice walked on the ground till present time, people have been here on this land.

As for the Bong State Recreation Area model. It was an air field - not the largest munitions production plant in the country. Bong is also the first state recreation area, and part of the site is a golf course. Despite objections between 1952 and 1954, 59 farm families were bought out, and in 1958, round the clock construction began to get the job done before winter, yet \$29 million later the project was halted - unnecessary. Ag was no longer possible because topsoil had been removed. In 1960, the land was federal surplus property. The reuse frenzy began. Finally the entire hunk of land was transferred to the Conservation Commission and there was a formal naming of the Bong Recreation and

Wildlife Area in 1974. The master plan for the 4,515-acre site was created in 1976, initiated in the 1980s.

They have dog training (pick up after yourself), model airplanes, rocketry, falconry, horseback riding, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, 216 campsites with amenities (just wear orange during hunting season - as per the website), dog sledding, ice fishing, ATV sports, land sailing, ultralight aviation, nature trails, picnicking, cross-country skiing,/snowshoeing. It has something for everyone in the special use zone which is managed to insure compatibility - but if the station is unmanned, there are details on the website for how to register and get a permit. People need to call one week ahead to get permission to schedule group activities like aeronautics or rocketry. Also hunting hours at Bong may differ from regulations.

One blogger states: "Shame on Wisconsin for even offering camping at this buggy cesspit of a park!" while another is pleased toilets are always stocked with toilet paper, but the advertised beach is nonexistent. Some say there is something there for everyone. Those who live close and frequent the park say it's not in the top five of the state, but could be fine if passing through.

That sounds like mixed reviews and experienced campers are most critical. Is this what we want next to Devil's Lake State Park! Do we want to have its reputation decline?

If Chicago can have a Wilderness that has national and international recognition and appreciation, why can't Sauk County have the Sauk Prairie Conservation Area that will be a national and international attraction from its restoration through generations to come. There is a need for modeling and training areas for habitat restoration.

Meanwhile, the communities north and south of the site anticipate building the world-class Great Sauk Trail, stepping up to the reputation of the Elroy-Sparta Trail (10th in the nation). Proximity to Madison and Devil's Lake means this will be a local asset and a regional - if not a - national destination. We anticipate connecting to a network of trails from Lake Michigan, as well as to Illinois, Minnesota and Iowa state lines, and communities here have waited a long time for this to become a reality. That means the Badger land must be open and accessible to trail users all days, not some days or scheduled days. It means recreational uses must be compatible with trail users. It means we want to also capitalize on Wisconsin being second in the nation in birding and having significant birding area in the immediate area. We believe in our vision.

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Bill Stehling, Sauk City

Proposed uses of this property should not adversely impact or compromise the missions and visions of the other property owners. Nor should they impact the lives and livelihood of adjacent residents.

Why does WDNR not use the Badger Reuse Plan they collaborated to create jointly with potential landowners at that time and stakeholders - local municipalities, school districts, Sauk County, the state, the University system, and a broad range of NPOs from the Badger History Group, CSWAB and the Conservation Alliance to Prairie Enthusiasts and groups interested in hunting, handicapped hunting and youth hunting.

One vision and goal was to heal the land, the people and the community. Another was to collaboratively manage the property as a single entity with low impact reuses (described then by the National Parks Service as hiking, biking and primitive camping). Those were the definitions written in the transfer documents from the National Parks Service to WDNR.

Please define your terms:

Special events staging area and associated special use permits. This may be done at Bong but here this may lead to exclusive and incompatible uses and user as well as landowner conflicts.

This is a large piece of property surrounded by farms with livestock and residential developments. The people have endured contaminated private drinking water wells, explosions during cleanup of road tubes and foundations - their houses have shaken and basements cracked. Quiet is a valuable commodity around the world. If your type three land management classification is defined by the noise of dual-sport motorcycles and model and High-Power Rocketry, these are not low-impact recreational activities. These will impact the missions of the other landowners and also the low-impact recreational activity users.

The Badger Lands should not and must not be a sacrifice zone for incompatible user groups as has happened at the former Bong Air Base.

The Master Plan states: The management area designations within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area are 62% recreational use instead of habitat or native

community management which is 34%. Yet WDNR, based on their own research, advises providing extensive and contiguous grasslands for threatened and endangered grassland and cavity nesting birds. Scott Klug held a commission here and in 7 weeks announced 2% of the property would be for threatened and endangered species and commissioners wanted to know how those species would know where they should live. This triggered the demand for a facilitated reuse process. WDNR participated in the Reuse process and now that they have received their land, they state only .5% of the property is classified as a Native Community Management Area - 17 acres. This demonstrates a disproportionate emphasis on recreation management over habitat management.

The magazine and Rocket Area are used by grassland and cavity nesters as is stated in the property analysis. High impact reuses in this area will reduce that bird use, noise being a critical factor. That noise will also impact research projects, livestock on and off the property, and the people who live near the property.

Response to the Draft Sauk Prairie Recreation Area (SPRA) Master Plan & Environmental Impact Statement

Don Hammes, Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter Executive Committee
Thursday, September 10, 2015

My name is Don Hammes and I am here today to speak for the Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter headquartered in Madison. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is an organization made up of 15,000 members and supporters from throughout Wisconsin working to promote clean energy and protect land and water resources.

There are many things that are favorable in the Sauk Prairie Recreational Area (SPRA) draft Master Plan including plans to restore the hydrology in the northern portion of the DNR property and the proposed use of grazing animals to control shrubs and forbs in several different areas. What I wish to do today, however, is point out several areas of concern to our organization. Chief among these concerns is the fact that according to the Master Plan 1,647 acres of DNR land is planned to be designated “oak openings” while 1,519 acres is planned to be designated “grasslands”. (Executive summary, pg. XV) The focus and the dream of most citizens interested in the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area has always been to restore the majority of the land to grassland prairie for both historic reasons and to restore, maintain, and enhance grassland bird populations, particularly grassland bird species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). While “oak openings” are appropriate in the area below the Baraboo Hills the total amount of land planned for oak openings is not in concert with the overwhelming public preferences for this land.

A second related area of concern regards the statement on page 15 of the Master Plan that says, “...the Department’s desire is to provide high quality experiences and to focus on those activities for which the site is particularly well suited, *not to include all possible recreational opportunities.*” In reality, many more than the five statutorily defined recreational activities of hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and cross country skiing are planned for SPRA. These additional activities include: mountain biking, trail biking, dual sport motorcycles, horseback riding, rocketry, snowmobiles, horse drawn buggies and carts (pg. 17,21), snowshoeing, dog sledding, skijoring (pg.22), dog trials, agricultural cropping, and a wide range of special events (pg. 28). The Master Plan also notes that the potential exists for a shooting range (pg. 29), geocaching, paintball courses, dog parks, community gardens and even Army National Guard helicopter training exercises. Add to this 15 miles of biking trails, 10 miles of hiking trails, five miles of mountain biking trails and 15 miles of roads (pg. 18) and SPRA will be a busy place indeed. In fact, there are few recreational activities that are **not included** in the SPRA Master Plan. This is not what the public’s vision is for this land and it should not be DNR’s vision.

Another area of concern is the discussion of how much DNR land will be devoted to farmland. Presently 145 acres (pg. 38,42) are dedicated to farmland/cropping but time and time again the Plan mentions that additional lands will be devoted to cropping and other agricultural uses (pg. 45) to prevent the spread of invasive plants and shrubs. The amount of additional ag land planned is not specified. Once additional funding is secured, the Plan points out that Dairy Forage Research Center (DFRC) plans to construct a new research complex that will include an additional herd of 450 cows (pg. 8) to bring the total, not counting calf’s and heifers, to 800 cows. Additional forage crops will be needed to support the increased herd size and since DNR land is already used to support DFRC operations the question of how much additional DNR land will be used to support DFRC and for how long needs to be addressed in this Plan. The widespread use of herbicides and insecticides (pg. 42) on DNR agricultural lands also needs more consideration in relation to soil contamination, contamination of wildlife and health dangers to people using the property for recreational activities. The EIS is totally lacking in this area.

A fourth area of concern is the apparent lack of water availability for human consumption, horses, dogs, wildlife and birds since nearly all the groundwater is still contaminated at levels not safe for human consumption.(pg. 28) Ponds, seepage areas, creeks, and all standing water collection points need to be considered contaminated and unsafe. The EIS is truly weak in this area. Army plans for a new municipal water system are not approved by local governments and local sentiment is to not approve this plan. The Army even states that before any groundwater is used they must be consulted.

A fifth area of great concern is the lack of staffing dedicated to land management, restoration, maintenance, and law enforcement. The DNR has well over 3,000 acres of land at the SPRA with more than 24 possible recreational uses and no funds for staff except for \$15,000 (pg. 120) for occasional part time assistance???. This is not realistic by any stretch of the imagination. The opportunity for law violations alone dictate a need for additional staffing. Uses of firearms, bows and arrows, crossbows, alcoholic beverages, fires, as well as user conflicts, user emergency health problems, and many of the planned recreational activities all require a staffing presence. And this is not something that can be delayed until future years as the Master Plan suggests. As my grandson would say, "Get real!"

Turning to another area of concern, the potential for human health risks is not at a level acceptable in all areas of DNR land. Although the Department of Health Services considered health hazards for human consumption(pg.107, 118) of grazing animals they did not consider health hazards for human consumption of deer, turkeys, pheasants, ducks, fish, and other wild game(pg. 44, 118). Mercury levels in Gruber's Bay are the second highest levels in the State and this area provides fishing opportunities for residents and the general public. In addition, soil contamination in area M1 and the settling ponds area in the lands on the southern boarder are at much higher levels than normally accepted for human recreational areas consequently restricting human activities to those that will not disturb the soil.....a most difficult practice to prevent 24/7. Assumptions that this land will not be disturbed or it will be snow covered four months of the year and therefore safe are false positives. The EIS is badly lacking in this area.

Regarding the history (pg. 101) of the land and public participation sections of the Master Plan, it is significant that no mention is made of the Badger Oversight Management Commission (BOMC) (II. G.,Pgs. 5,6,etc). This group of landowners and stakeholders met many, many times for many, many hours to review and discuss possible land uses and land use issues and helped foster adherence to the values of the Badger Reuse Plan. They provided an important link between the Army and the landowners and the public. Members of the news media regularly attended these meetings. To not even mention their contribution to the Badger restoration process is a travesty.

The concept of promoting pheasant hunting is a good one, but it is disappointing that the standard DNR "Put and Take" pheasant hunting activity is being proposed instead of the planting of habitat and food plots that would foster the propagation of native birds. Also, no mention is made of stocking quail, Hungarian partridge or prairie chickens. This grassland habitat is ideal for these bird species and stocking would provide additional hunting opportunities.

Lastly, we found it terribly disappointing that for a regional recreation area the size of the SPRA only one public hearing on the draft master plan was scheduled and that one was held in the small community of Prairie du Sac. Certainly a second public hearing could have been scheduled in Baraboo or a Madison location.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to offer some of the concerns of the Sierra Club on the DNR draft Master Plan.

Sept. 10, 2015

TO: Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation

Bureau of Parks and Recreation

RE: **Sauk Prairie Recreation Area-**

Draft Master Plan/Environmental Impact Statement

FROM: Ferry Bluff Eagle Council, John Keefe, President

Thank you for the opportunity to address the draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.

Ferry Bluff Eagle Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving habitat areas for wintering and nesting bald eagles in the Sauk Prairie area.

When we first organized more than 25 years ago, FBEC focused on wintering eagles and their habitat. It was not until about 2002 that nesting eagles in our area became numerous enough that we felt it appropriate to expand our conservation efforts to include this part of the annual cycle as well. Since then, the numbers of nests have continued to grow quite dramatically, and some eagles have built nests in places we would not have suspected, including SP Recreation Area.

The lesson to be learned from this unanticipated development of year-round eagle activity is to constantly ask the question, "What if...?" What if planned recreational activities at Badger Recreation impede eagle habitat, either in winter or spring or summer or fall? What if eagles are disturbed by certain activities?

Certain parts of the draft plan are sensitive to the habitat needs of bald eagles. The decision to exclude ATVs is one example, for which the DNR and Bureau deserve credit. Re-locating shooting ranges out of the Recreation Area is another, especially when so many private clubs exist in the area and throughout the state. Inclusion of snowmobiling and a rocket launch area, even on limited bases, raise questions and concerns. What if, someday in the future, a rocket and an eagle collide? Improbable, yes. Impossible? Hardly. Who among us would want to deal with the fall-out from such a "What if?"

You speak of habitat management. But most of your focus seems to be on vegetation management. What if you expanded your definition to emphasize more eagle habitat management, as well as other bird and wildlife? Under this option, vehicular traffic and other activities creating noises need to be screened out to promote eagle and other wildlife options.

SP Recreation Area has the potential for being a beautiful space, but not necessarily for all of the "blend of recreation activities" you propose. More selectivity is strongly suggested, selectivity that encourages not just vegetation management but also bird and wildlife habitat management as well. To this end we believe it possible to both restore native ecosystems (predominantly oak savanna and prairie) on the SP Recreation Area property while improving eagle habitat in summer and winter. Few places under DNR ownership offer such an opportunity and we feel this is the highest and best use of the SP Recreation Area.

To assist in this process, we encourage you to use the "National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines," distributed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in May 2007. The "Activity-Specific Guidelines" on pp. 10-12 are especially relevant. We would hope these could be applied not only as they are now, but reflecting the ever-changing needs of eagle habitat and other wildlife.

What if...SP Recreation Area became a model for vegetation and eagle and wildlife management, year around? This objective is consistent with the Badger Re-Use Plan.

The Tripoli Wisconsin Association, the Wisconsin arm of the Tripoli Rocketry Association, is honored that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is considering the inclusion of model rocketry in the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area development plan. Our hobby has a proven safety record and our local organization has had a long-standing, positive relationship with the DNR.

The plan for this recreation area is still a work in progress and numerous groups have expressed their interest in the site and how they would like to see the land mature. We feel that the possibilities for such a large parcel of land to accommodate numerous activities, as well as supporting and developing a vibrant home to native wildlife, is an excellent idea.

Our presence at the site would help boost the local economy as we patronize local restaurants, hotels and businesses. And our park attendance would increase money raised by the DNR through entrance fees to defer the costs of the land restoration.

We are a tidy group; we clean up after ourselves and often after litterbugs who have come before us. We believe in being good tenants on the public and private lands we visit while pursuing our hobby. And we believe in educating students groups, often mentoring high school and college students to working on rocketry-related assignments at our launches.

The Sauk Prairie Recreation Area is a unique and large parcel of public land and we believe it should be open to the public for many different types of activities, including model rocketry. Thank you for hearing our concerns.

My name is Gail Lamberty

I am vice president of the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance and co-chair of the Badger Forward Committee. The mission of the Alliance is quite simply to implement the Badger Reuse Committee Report. We will be submitting formal comments for your review.

However for right now, I would like all of us to just stop for a moment. Take a breath, step back and remember why we are here.

Look at this room, look around at all these people. Why are we here? What are we doing tonight?

We are here because we the people of Wisconsin have been given an amazing gift. We have over 3,000 acres of land that have been obtained at no dollar cost. Let me say that again. No dollar cost. No entry in the line item budget. Not one dime. The accounting, however, comes in the responsibility to honor that so beautiful, so abused piece of land.

You, WDNR have been the spokesperson for the people of Wisconsin, and we thank you.

We thank you for being, along with the Alliance and 19 others, co-creators of the Badger Reuse Committee Report. The state of Wisconsin actually had 3 of the 21 seats on that committee. Your role was huge. You created the nine values to guide the future use of the property. You, your neighboring land owners Ho-Chunk, Dairy Forage, and Bluff View Sanitary said it's not about who owns which piece of the property, we will manage it together as a whole. Thank you for the promise to uphold those nine values.

We thank you for being specific in your application to the National Park Service. You told them the property will be used primarily for conservation and low impact recreation -- hiking, picnicking, prairie, savanna and grassland restoration. What an amazing opportunity, and what a great commitment to that abused beat up landscape. Thank you for making that promise.

We thank you for studying the property so very carefully in the 2012 property analysis. You defined the best role for Badger as restoration with compatible recreation. Recreation that is compatible with restoration. Clearly stated. The recreation -read that re-creation -only compatible with restoration-- giving back to mother earth what she has given us. Thank you for that promise.

You have put your signature on the line to the documents that obtained this acreage with promises to the land, promises to your neighboring land owners and the promises to the generations that will follow us. For over ten years you have made promises to this land and we thank you.

Sometimes the poets say it better than all our detailed analysis, mountains of reports, hours of meetings:

We have miles to go and promises to keep

We have miles to go and promises to keep

I am old enough to remember when Devils Lake allowed motor boats on it. The huge speed boats, and there were many on that small lake, with their outboard motors revved up, raced across the lake and made a lot of noise and created huge waves. The motor boats churned up the water and there was a constant drone on the lake. My mother was a sun worshipper and we were at that lake every day all summer long. The cacophony of the motors was ever-present and drowned out the quieting sounds of nature.

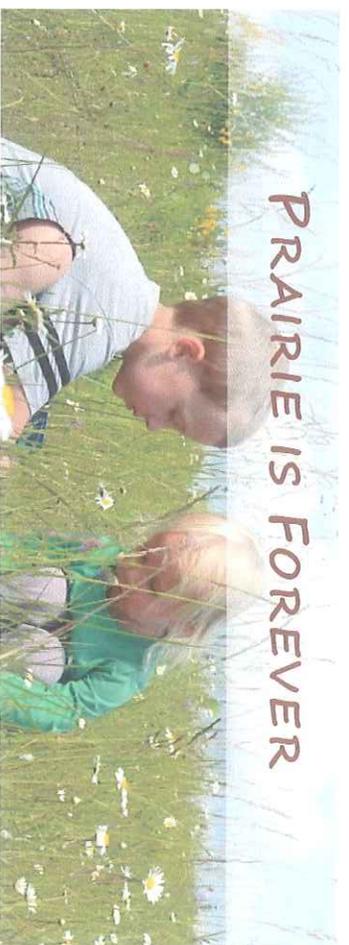
When the motor boat ban took place, it was like night and day at Devils Lake. I will never forget the first time that I really looked at the beauty of the lake and saw and heard it in a different way. This was the way nature intended it to be. Getting rid of the noise factor and the pollution from the great big outboard motors was wonderful.

I am happy that there are no guns or ATVs in the DNR master plan. But now, I see that there are rockets and motorized bikes in the plan? What part of the original agreement that talked of "conservation and low-impact recreation" isn't understood here? Rockets and motorized bikes, whether they are part of some sanctioned club or not, are not conducive to the terms under which this land was given. Please stick with the original agreement to use the lands for conservation and low-impact recreation and do not allow the serenity or the terrain to be destroyed. Thank you.

Susan Holmes

55694 Highway 113

Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913



PRAIRIE IS FOREVER

When GSWAB first organized 25 years ago, we did not imagine that the work for a healthy and sustainable future for the Badger lands would continue as long as it has. However, we also did not imagine that we would witness the remarkable transformation from the mechanics of industry to the peaceful expansive grasslands that we see today...

HABITAT

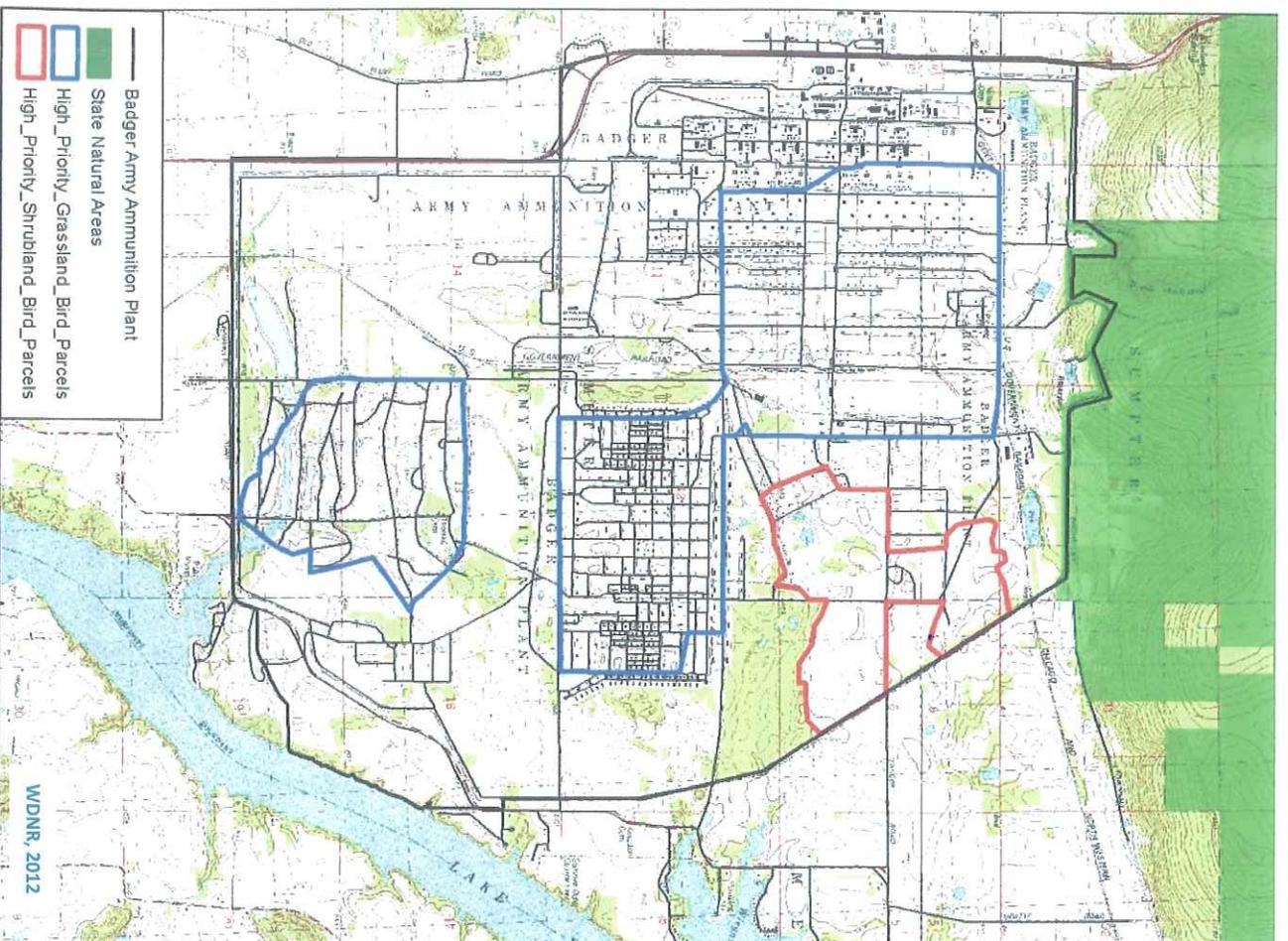
The 7,354-acre Badger property provides a variety of habitats which in turn have attracted a wide range of species. As the DNR has recognized in its draft Master Plan, these lands are critically important in maintaining and recovering some of the biological richness of our disappearing native grasslands. Surrounded by the beautiful Baraboo Hills, it is likely our largest and most viable opportunity to restore and manage a large-scale forest to grassland transition, and will play a pivotal role in the regional conservation of our grasslands and savannas.

Prairies and Oak Woodlands were historically common in Wisconsin but are now rare throughout the state. Restoration of these globally rare natural communities is critical to the survival of many rare plants and animals that depend on them. Prairie historically occupied more than 2 million acres in Wisconsin. Now, approximately 2,000 acres remain – less than 0.1%.

BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

The first significant biological inventory of Badger in 1993 identified 16 remnants of natural communities including prairie, oak savanna, dry forest, southern hardwood swamp, pine relict, acid bedrock glade, and sandy meadow. Nearly 600 plant species were identified including 10 rare species. In addition, 25 species of butterflies, 137 aquatic insects including 6 new county records, 15 mammals, and 16 herpetiles (reptiles and amphibians) were identified on the Badger plant property.

The Badger property contains a mix of grasslands with small remnants of native prairie, scattered oak woodlands, and farm fields. It currently hosts some of the largest populations of grassland birds in southern Wisconsin – 103 bird species have been recorded here, of which 21 have critical status in our state. With the Baraboo Hills adjacent to the north, the Badger lands provide a rare continuum of grassland to oak forest.



Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger

E12629 Weigand's Bay South, Merrimac, WI 53561

www.oswab.org www.facebook.com/oswab.org

Many of the species identified at the Badger plant are found in places with such unlikely names as the Rocket Area, the Magazine Area, the Acid Area, the Propellant Burning Grounds, the Nitroglycerine Pond and the Cannon Range. Most of these plant and animal species occupied the prairie long before the Badger plant was built in 1942.

Within the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area (the DNR portion of Badger) are two ecologically significant sites that warrant high protection and/or restoration consideration during the development of the property Master Plan.

GRASSLAND BIRDS

The highest quality habitats for grassland birds are found in the extensive non-native (surrogate) grasslands in the south-central and north-central sections of Badger. High-quality grassland bird habitat with a moderate shrub component is located in the northeast section of Badger. These sites, in conjunction with the large expanse of surrogate grassland making up the entire Badger property, offer an opportunity to restore two globally rare natural communities and improve habitat for many grassland, savanna, and woodland plant and animal specialists, especially grassland birds.

BIRDWATCHING

Wisconsin ranks second nationally in the proportion of citizens considered birders, with fully one-third of residents 16 and older reporting they travel to watch birds, or actively watch and identify birds around home, according to a recent U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service report. Wisconsin trailed only Vermont, where 39 percent of residents are birders, and tied with West Virginia, where 33 percent of their population also watches birds.

Wisconsin features both northern and southern breeding species and sits astride a major migration pathway, allowing birders easy access to one of the most diverse collections of bird life in the United States. More than 400 species have been recorded in Wisconsin, with the vast majority of species and numbers being migratory birds. Others, like chickadees, cardinals, grouse, and turkeys, are permanent residents.

Nationally, there are about 47 million birders, about 20 percent of the population 16 and older, according to the report. They spent an estimated \$41 billion on trip related expenditures and equipment, generated a total economic impact of \$106 billion, supported 666,000 jobs and generated \$13 billion in state and federal tax revenues.

A QUIET SOUND ENVIRONMENT

All of these positive economic and ecological benefits require a QUIET sound environment. Acoustic interference from noise can hamper the detection of song by birds of the same species, making it more difficult for them to establish and maintain territories, attract mates, and/or maintain pair bonds. This, in turn, may reduce breeding success in noisy environments.

When begging for food, nestlings may need to call louder to elicit the desired response from their parents, thereby increasing the energetic cost of obtaining food and potentially decreasing fitness. Scientific studies have documented a correlation between high urban noise levels and songbird diversity – the more noise, the fewer the number of bird species.

WHOOPI!

Unfortunately, the draft Master Plan proposes on/off-road motorcycles and sport rocketry on the former Badger lands. These particular uses stand apart as inherently loud and disruptive, and therefore undermine the conservation goals for the property to maintain and recover the biological richness of Wisconsin's disappearing native prairies, particularly grassland birds. Moreover, they are also not compatible with other desirable recreational activities proposed for Badger like biking, family picnics, bird watching, snowshoeing, and hiking.

QUIET nature-based recreation is in keeping with promises made. The Badger Reuse Plan represents the consensus of 21 representatives of local, state, federal and tribal units of government (including WDNRI) as well as neighboring landowners, businesses, school districts, CSWAB and other nonprofits. The Badger Reuse Plan emphasizes conservation and low-impact recreational activities and it is still in effect today. This is our promise to the next generation and those that will follow.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Join the hundreds of people from all over Wisconsin who have already submitted comments supporting QUIET nature-based recreation at the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.



Go to [CSWAB.org](#) and click on our Action Alerts!



The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance's (Alliance) analysis of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (WDNR) Draft Master Plan (Plan) for the 3,400-acre Sauk Prairie Recreation Area (SPRA) provides a summary of important restoration and recreation issues. The full Plan is extensive and detailed. Only some of the most important issues are considered in this summary.

The Alliance has focused its analysis on the commitments, values and information found in several guiding documents created during the nearly two-decade process of determining the re-use of the former 7,400-acre Badger Army Ammunition Plant. While these guiding documents are lengthy, the three critical statements below encapsulate the guidance for the entire Plan.

YOUR TOOLKIT FOR ACTION

09-2015 SAUK PRAIRIE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.



SAUK PRAIRIE
CONSERVATION
ALLIANCE

PO BOX 403
Baraboo, WI 53913
saukprairievision.org

Analyzing the plan

While these guiding documents are long and detailed, there are three general statements that stand out in providing guidance for what should be included in the Plan, these are:

The conversion of the Badger lands provides remarkable opportunities for the protection, enhancement, use, restoration, and enjoyment of the property's unique natural and cultural features. In its work, the BRC has sought to highlight these opportunities and to achieve a realistic, community consensus vision for realizing them." And "The Badger property is [to be] managed as a single unit. The managers and owners of land and activities have an affirmative, formal obligation and written agreement to manage the property collaboratively and holistically, and to empower local stakeholders in identifying, discussing, and influencing major management and long-term use decisions.

2001 FINAL REPORT OF THE BADGER REUSE COMMITTEE (ALSO KNOWN AS THE BADGER REUSE PLAN)

Many groups with varying interests in Badger share a common goal with WDNR to convert it to a recreational property with low impact recreation (hiking, picnicking, primitive camping), prairie, savanna and grassland restoration, environmental education and cultural/historical interpretation with potential for an education center.

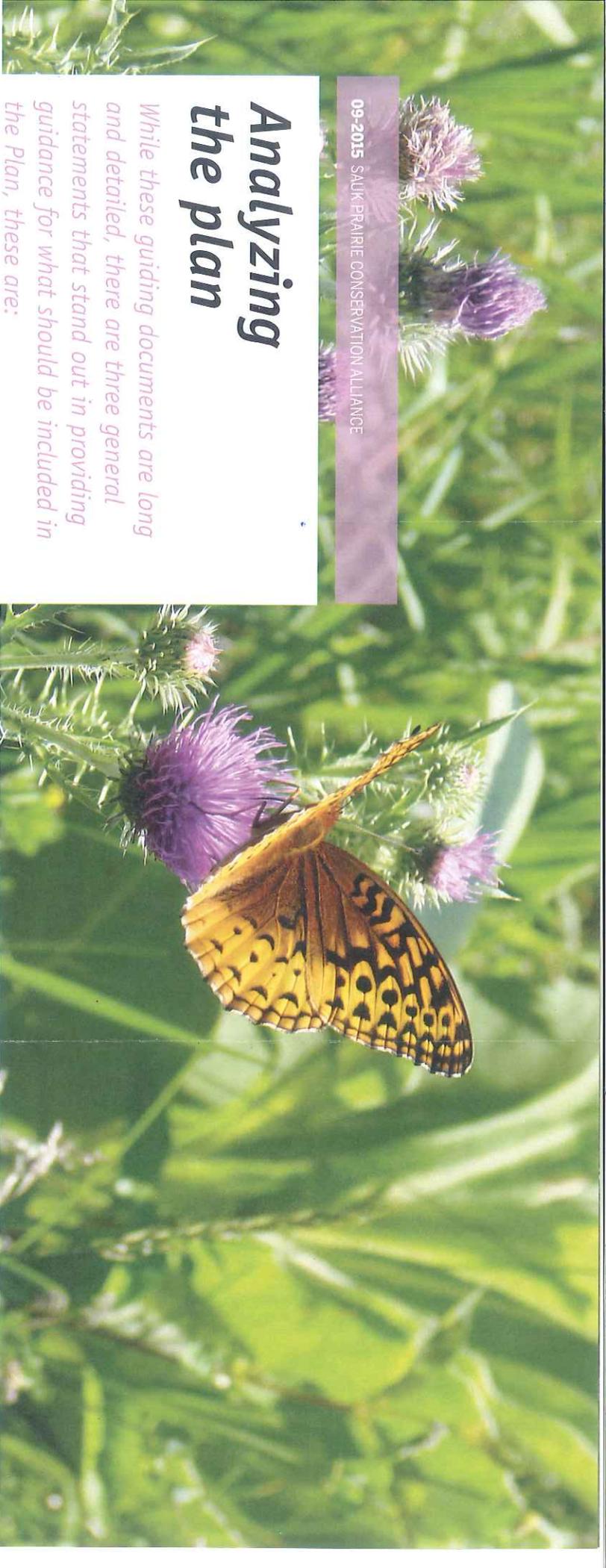
2004 WDNR'S APPLICATION FOR LANDS AT BADGER UNDER THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICES' "FEDERAL LANDS TO PARKS" PROGRAM

Based on this report's findings, the best overall functional role for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area is to fulfill the highlighted ecological opportunities available while maximizing compatible recreation opportunities. This approach also takes into consideration the nine key values identified in the Badger Reuse Plan, approved by the Sauk County Board in 2001.

2012 WDNR'S REGIONAL AND PROPERTY ANALYSIS: SAUK PRAIRIE RECREATION AREA

Based on these commitments, the main criteria considered in analyzing the WDNR's Plan for the SPRA are:

- the restoration, enhancement and enjoyment of the cultural and natural features of the Badger lands;
- all Badger lands be, as much as possible, cooperatively managed as a single property by the landowners;
- the recreational uses of the Badger lands be low-impact in nature; and
- the recreational uses of the Badger lands be compatible with the restoration of the land.





09-2015 SAUK PRAIRIE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

This is what you need to do.

The following points indicate important issues in the Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area that you may want to address in your comments to the Department of Natural Resources.

WDNR's Plan contains proposals for **restoration** of the land as well as recreation on the landscape. These two major land uses are intertwined throughout the Plan. While these are often compatible, there are some proposals in the Plan that may be incompatible and/or lead to user-conflicts.

In general the proposal for **restoration** work is well-defined and well done. WDNR is to be commended for its commitment to the restoration of this land and creating the necessary partnerships to accomplish it. When completed in fifty years, almost all of the land will be restored to native prairie, savanna and oak woodland communities.

The **recreation** proposals in the Plan provide for a range of appropriate low-impact opportunities, including hiking and bicycling, and a limited road network to allow visitors to travel to the major features throughout the property. Although the previously considered ATV trails and shooting range are not included in this Plan, it now includes rocketry and dual-sport motorcycles on bicycle and equestrian trails. While the Plan limits these activities to certain number of days, they remain



Suggested Improvements for Compatibility with Restoration and Recreation

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a full hiking trail network accessing all parts of the SPRA property.

The Plan includes only one major hiking trail from the proposed visitor center at the middle of the property to the northern edge of SPRA. WDNR's own research confirms a vast majority of outdoor recreation is in the form of walking and hiking. More hiking trails which reach all areas of the property are needed at SPRA.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop specific definitions, procedures & criteria for what low-impact activities will be allowed as special events at the SPRA.

The Plan includes a special events staging area and allows for special events which may entail exclusive use of some or all of the SPRA lands for up to five four-day weekends

RECOMMENDATION: Plan a snowmobile trail along the perimeter of the property, keeping motorized recreation out of the interior of the property.

Snowmobiles are a high-impact recreational activity, and should be kept out of the interior of the property. Two proposed routes for snowmobiles are offered in the Plan, one along the eastern perimeter, the other on the Great Sauk Trail (GST). The perimeter route closely follows a long-used route on private land and it has been supported by both the Badger Oversight and Management Commission and snowmobile interests. Snowmobiles on the Great Sauk Trail could severely impede other winter uses on the GST and disrupt the quiet sports opportunities within the SPRA.

Additional General Concerns

RECOMMENDATION: Collaborate with all landowners at Badger to craft a cohesive and comprehensive management plan for all of the Badger lands & plan for a shared visitor center.

The 2001 Badger Reuse Plan, to which the WDNR is a signa-

planned "special events staging area" and associated "special use permits" may lead to exclusive and incompatible uses and user conflicts.

Compatible with Restoration and Low-impact Recreation

- Long-term restoration of the land to a prairie and savanna landscape.
- Conservation agriculture in the restoration process.
- Public education and interpretation of the natural and cultural history of the Badger lands.
- A limited road network that allows access to important sites within the SPRA, but keeps large roadless parcels.

Incompatible with Restoration and Low-impact Recreation

- Dual-sport motorcycles are not low-impact recreation, even on a limited basis.
- Model and High Power Rocketry is not a low-impact recreation due to noise, safety and possible contaminants.
- A shooting range should not again be considered for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.

This exclusive use of the property could lead to significant user-conflicts. New criteria should be added to the Plan, including an analysis of potential impacts and user-conflicts, and ensure that there is very limited exclusive use of the property. The procedures for approving special events should include a range of expertise beyond the property manager alone.

RECOMMENDATION: Limit hunting season in the SPRA from November 15 to May 1.

Hunting within the SPRA is proposed to include all hunting seasons from mid-October to late-May. This will result in conflicts with low-impact users of the property in the spring and fall seasons. In the adjacent Devil's Lake State Park, some accommodation is made to other users by delaying the beginning of hunting seasons to mid-November.

RECOMMENDATION: Limit dog training to the approved hunting seasons on the SPRA.

A 72-acre Class II Dog Training Area is proposed in the southern portion of the Magazine Area. This year-round use, that includes the use of firearms, poses a conflict with rare grassland birds breeding in the area. There are also potential conflicts with other users in this area and with adjoining land owners.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a more equitable balance between recreation & habitat/native community management areas.

The Management Area designations within the SPRA are primarily recreational use (62%) rather than habitat or native community management (34%). Only 17 acres, 0.5 percent of the property are classified as a Native Community Management Area. This demonstrates a disproportionate emphasis on recreation over habitat management.

Send your comments to:

The entire Draft Master Plan along with a public comment sheet and online questionnaire can be found on the WDNR's website at: dnr.wi.gov/topic/Lands/masterplanning/SaukPrairie/ by **FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2015.**

Additional comments on the Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area can be found on the Alliance's website at www.saukprairievision.org. The Alliance's full Response to WDNR on the Draft Master Plan will be available after the WDNR's Public Hearing on **September 10.**

very specifically stated that the Badger lands, whoever the eventual owners might be, should be managed as a single, cohesive property. In its application to the National Park Service, the WDNR stated it would plan for the entire Badger lands and not just their own portion of the property. WDNR's Plan for the SPRA is a stand-alone document that includes few references to the plans of other Badger landowners, and it does not describe how WDNR will coordinate with other landowners on recreation-based management. The most obvious omission is lack of consideration for a combined visitor center/museum to serve visitors to all of the Badger lands.

RECOMMENDATION: The EIS needs to be greatly expanded to demonstrate that potential short-term and cumulative impacts of proposed recreational activities have been thoroughly evaluated. A process needs to be identified for mitigating future impacts, including multiple-user conflicts, soil erosion, noise abatement and other similar impacts.

While entitled a Draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, the impact statement portion of the document is weak and offers limited evaluation of the short-term and cumulative impacts of the proposed recreational activities, including mountain biking and horse riding (soil erosion and invasive species). Potential multiple-user conflicts are not addressed. For example, many users will come to the SPRA for the enjoyment of silence and solitude in an open space, but many of the proposed recreational activities have inherent noise levels that could intrude on those visitors' experiences.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide details of the anticipated cost of implementing the Plan & the anticipated funding sources.

Limited information concerning the expected costs of implementing the Plan is found in various places in the Plan, but is not clearly summarized in any one place. There is almost no summary of what the anticipated costs of restoration might be. Particularly in light of the current limited funding for WDNR projects, it is important to understand overall costs associated with the proposed work over the life of the Plan and anticipated funding sources.



Dear DNR Official,

The attached slides are from the detailed briefing I made to the DNR and the State Trails Council explaining the concept of repurposing trails for special events.

The State Trails Council, which represents a broad array of trail users, unanimously recommended that the DNR adopt repurposing.

If there are officials that would like to hear this briefing again, I would be gladly repeat it.

Otherwise, I am available to answer questions about what is in the slides.

Regards,

Bryan Much
(card attached)



Temporary Repurposing of Trails for Special Events

Bryan Much
Off-Highway Motorcycle Representative
State Trails Council - Wisconsin

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to provide information about temporarily repurposing a trail designated for a specific use to another use for a special event.

Two Examples

One will be about repurposing horse trails in Minnesota for an off-highway motorcycle event at Zumbro Bottoms (MN DNR).

The other will be about repurposing hiking and mountain bike trails for an off-highway motorcycle event at Land Between the Lakes Recreation Area in Kentucky (USFS).

Background

Over time, we have been able to provide an expansive system of trails to support public recreation.

Demand for the use of trails continues to rise and additional user groups have emerged, but land and other resources in support of trails is often constrained.

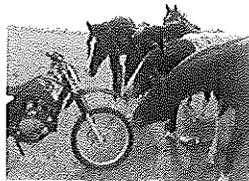
We need to explore new approaches to getting the most that we can from our trail resources.



Background Continued

One solution might be to repurpose some trails on a temporary basis as an opportunity to try to meet part of the unmet demand for some user groups.

Even an infrequent alternate use of a trail for a special event can provide relatively significant opportunities for some user groups to be able to enjoy their recreational interest.



Zumbro Bottoms Management Unit

Part of the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest

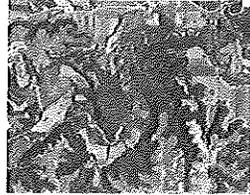
Near Wabasha, MN

About 45 miles of horse trails. 2d most used equestrian trails in MN.

Derived from tax forfeited land.



Zumbro Bottoms Map and Image

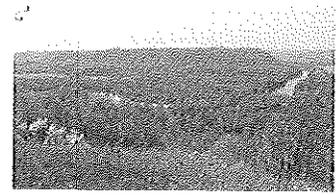


Information from the Motorcycle Club

1980s, had three areas with motorized recreation.

Reduced to two with the provision that two weekends per year in the largest area would be OHM use.

The only single track motorcycle trail is the horse trail in the Zumbro unit. The other two units are ATV.

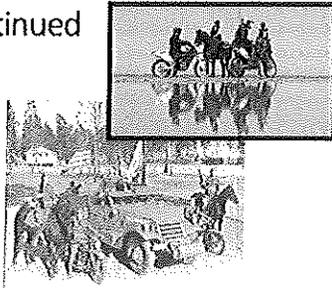


MC Club Info, Continued

Two events, one before Memorial Day and one after Labor Day.

700 riders each iteration. About 25% under age 18.

Open to ATVs and remains open to equestrians with some use during the events.

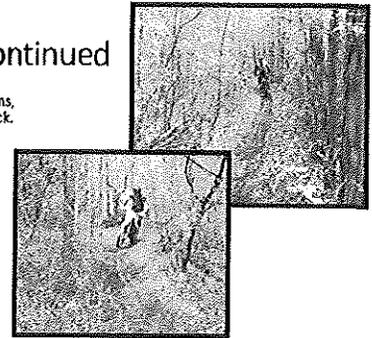


MC Club Info, Continued

About 45 miles of trail. 15 bottoms, 10 woods two track, 20 single track.

300' elevation.

Most trail temporarily arrowed as one-way for the event.



MC Club Info, Continued

Special Use Permit, \$200 fee. \$1.5M insurance required.

Club charges \$20 for kids and \$40 for adults for the weekend. DNR camping fees is separate expense.

Club pays for event costs: meal, insurance, trail maintenance, arrows, portable toilets, dumpster and the like.

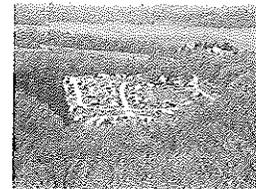


Club Info, Continued

The club does trail maintenance each year to prepare for the event and to tidy up after the event. The club also spends \$2K plus per year for dust control in the campground.

All this benefits the principal users of the trail (equestrians).

The club, DNR, and equestrians meet jointly each year to work out trail issues.



Club Info, Continued

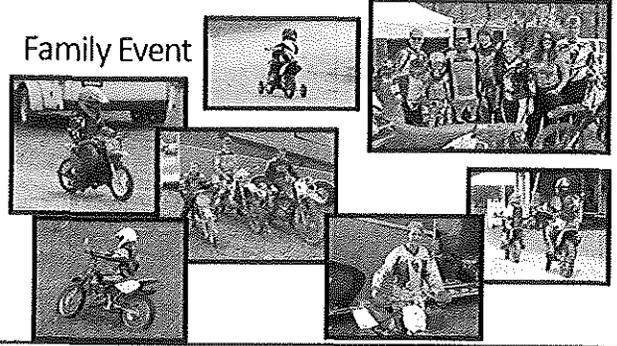
The club has trail maintenance equipment of their own and the DNR furnishes them with a tractor and blade.

The DNR inspects immediately after the event to verify that the trail is in good condition.

No invasive species issues to date.



Family Event



Men and Women of Many Ages



MN DNR

Shortly before the interview, the club had 27 people out at Zumbro doing trail maintenance – even before the trails opened. Carefully scheduled during turkey season.

Club has five days to restore things. Usually complete in two.

No remarkable wear after 700 OHM riders. Horses are tough on trails.



MN DNR

Mountain bikes not allowed on the horse trails.

Trail maintenance issues are routine with the usual hot spots and such.

Post event campground inspection reveals it is better than it was prior to the event.



MN DNR

MN OHM sticker is required but little sticker money goes to the trail.

Relies on horse fees.

DNR is very happy to offer these two riding opportunities at Zumbro each year. Would like to put in a new facility in nearby Houston County for ATV, OHM, and 4WD.



MN DNR

Some minor opposition. Repeated several times that opposition from a few equestrians was very small and not representative of the rest.

Some complained that club made money on the event. DNR believes that they are more than getting a good deal with the trail maintenance the club provides.

Club is a non-profit so all funds have to go toward supporting OHM and cannot enrich individual club members.



MN DNR

Routine occasional park patrol during the events. No issues. Club member becomes camp host during that week.

DNR very happy with the events and notes that a critical element of their satisfaction is working with a good club that has the right attitude and that works hard to keep things going the way they should.



Zumbro Repurpose

WINI (OHM riding opportunity)

WINI (equestrians get trail maintenance and improvements from OHM club)

WINI (DNR provides significant recreation opportunity and benefits from the contributions of the OHM club)

Land Between the Lakes RA (USFS)

170,000 acre recreation area.

1963 TVA project took over land.

Now USFS property.



Land Between the Lakes (USFS)



Information from Motorcycle Club

1987 was the first OHM event.

Originally the club only asked for two tracks and roads. TVA outdoor recreation director suggested they use the hiking trails.

Trails were in bad shape and the recreation director wanted the clubs to help brush them, repair bridges, and burn in the treadway.



Information from Motorcycle Club

When USFS took over, there was a one year gap during which study and hearings conducted. Adjustments over the years.

Now use 75-80 miles of hiking and mountain bike trails supplemented by additional miles of two tracks and roads.

150 mile ride on Saturday and 100 mile ride on Sunday.

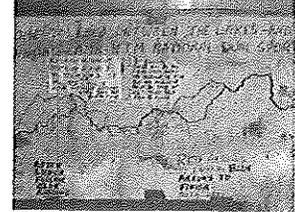


Information from Motorcycle Club

One weekend per year. After Labor Day and before hunting season.

250 riders (limit). Average age 47-48. From 24 states. Street licensed dual sport motorcycles.

No conflicts with other user groups due to signage and public notice.



Information from Motorcycle Club

\$750 permit fee to the USFS. Separate camping fees.

Area already has a 10,000 acre OHV area but still allows use of hiking and mountain bike trails so that OHM can get single track riding experience.

The rider running this is 78 years old and has been in it from the start. His 59 year old son and his two grandsons (in their 20s) make this happen. He goes out and does trail maintenance. Infectious enthusiasm.



Information from Motorcycle Club

Club does trail maintenance using OHM equipped with chain saw racks. No ATVs on single track.

USFS measures trail wear at select spots after each event.

OHM repurpose has proven to improve hiking trails.



Information from Motorcycle Club

No gas stations on LBL. Club hauls personal cans to a refuel site.

Club serves a meal.

New area supervisor just assigned from elsewhere in the USFS. She remarked the arrangement was highly unusual but after she experienced it first hand she was very supportive.



Information from USFS

One pass allowed on the mountain bike trails, two passes allowed on the hiking trails.

Pre and post event monitoring.

Best to have rain a couple of days before the event (packing agent). If too wet will stay off mountain bike trails.

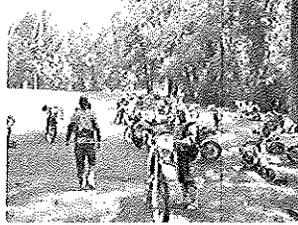


Information from USFS

If there is berming or ditching in spots, the FS fixes it – not the club. Clause in permit says no future permits if unmitigated problems from past. Two days OHM use on the trails is not a problem.

Event great for the local economy.

USFS puts word out to other users about alternate use of the trail for that weekend.



Information from USFS

Local mountain bike club does maintenance on mountain bike trails. They support the event long term.

Another NF does something similar. Might be South Carolina.

Club inspects bikes to make sure all is proper.

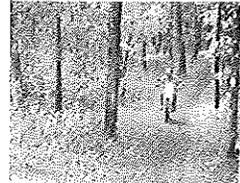
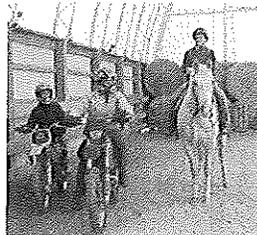


Information from the USFS

Event uses about half the sites in a 400 site campground. The rest use local motels.

There is a large horse camp nearby. They separate horses from bikes as horses don't like helmets. Club briefs etiquette pre-ride. Instructed to pull over for horses.

Club uses a roll chart for navigation. Puts up directional arrows the week before and takes them down the week after.



Land Between the Lakes Repurpose

WINI (OHM single track riding opportunity)

WINI (hikers and mountain bikers get trail maintenance and improvements from OHM club)

WINI (USFS provides significant recreation opportunity and benefits from the contributions of the OHM club)

Study – Erosional Impact of Hikers, Horses, Motorcycles, and Off-Road Bicycles on Mountain Trails in Montana

Horses caused greater increases in soil compaction, litter, trail width and depth compared to hikers and motorcycles. Horses apply greatest weight per unit area.

Motorcycle uphill worse than horse or hiker uphill travel. Motorcycle downhill better than horse or hiker downhill travel.

Suggests OHM use gentler climbs and steeper descents with the opposite being true for horses and hikers. (Trail design.)

No criticism of equestrians or hikers intended. Only trying to establish perspective.

Study – Which is more dangerous?

Compared motorcycles and horses.

Horseback riding 20 times more dangerous than motorcycling.

27 years average experience for seriously injured horse riders.

No criticism of equestrians intended. Only trying to establish perspective.

<p>Repurposing allows us to provide recreational opportunities to offset unmet demand without significantly detracting from the principal user group associated with a trail.</p> <p>Introducing an additional user group to a particular trail can produce benefits such as added contributions to trail maintenance.</p> <p>Communication and cooperation between user groups and trail managers can facilitate positive experiences for everyone involved.</p> <p>There will likely always be someone that will object to any new initiative or sharing of recreational opportunities. Reasonable compromise and accommodation is key to sharing the commons.</p>	<p>Repurposing Works!</p> <p>And it can work very well!</p> <p>Next Step: Explore potential opportunities.</p>
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A single track experience.



Questions?

Discussion?