

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 900

RECREATION

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900 RECREATION

Recreation is an integral part of the management of the Jackson County Forest and recreation uses are referenced in most of the previous chapters. Due to the tremendous growth in recreational demands over the duration of the last planning period, this Plan recognizes the importance of more intensive recreational planning and emphasizes its importance with a separate chapter.

905 PLANNING

In addition to this Plan, the Jackson County Outdoor Recreation Plan also guides the recreation program. This plan is revised every five years and is made part of this Plan. The Jackson County Outdoor recreation Plan includes, but is not limited to, activities on the County Forest. It incorporates snowmobile and ATV plans, campgrounds, parks and boat landings, recreational maintenance and development plans and other recreation surveys and reports.

The Outdoor Recreation Plan, Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), public input, and other local or regional planning documents will be used as resources in recreational planning and development efforts. The responsibility for recreational planning, development and maintenance on the County Forest will rest with the Committee.

910 AUTHORITY

The Jackson County Code of Ordinances and s.28.11 Wis. Stats, authorize the Jackson County Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee to provide recreational opportunities for the public. This authority is further recognized in the mission statement for the County Forest Plan (Chapter 100), which specifically identifies outdoor recreational opportunities. This mission statement also charges the Committee to conduct activities in a manner that prevents or minimizes environmental damage.

Maps of the recreational facilities managed through the Jackson County Forest program are appended or referenced in Chapter 1000.

915 ENTRANCE AND USER FEES

The Committee is empowered and shall have responsibility for establishing entrance, camping and other user fees on recreational facilities maintained by the County Forest. Camping, entrance or other fees shall be comparable to fees charged by (similar private facilities, other adjacent counties)

and are subject to periodic change by the Committee. Fees, where appropriate, will be utilized to assist in the maintenance of recreational facilities.

920 RECREATIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

It is permissible for the Committee to contract with clubs or individuals to provide for recreational maintenance or services to the public. As part of the Plan, the County may contract for the following services

1. Snowmobile trail grooming and maintenance
2. ATV trail grading and maintenance
3. Firewood sales
4. Concession and food service contracts
5. Canoe and kayak rentals

925 RECREATIONAL USE PERMITS FOR ORGANIZED EVENTS

Any event on the Forest which is advertised to the public, for which a fee is charged, or is otherwise organized as an event, requires a permit or authorization by the Committee. Permits may be issued by the Committee provided the use is consistent with management activities and will not cause resource damage. Appropriate levels of event liability insurance is required.

930 UNDESIGNATED RECREATIONAL USE OF THE FOREST

Undesignated recreation includes those informal activities for which the County Generally does not provide a facility or service. These uses include activities such as hunting, fishing, biking, hiking and others. These uses do not require a permit but must be conducted in compliance with ordinance. The Forest Administrator and the Committee shall periodically review such uses and enact ordinances as necessary to protect from resource damage.

930.1 HUNTING AND TRAPPING

The entire County Forest is open for regulated hunting and trapping, with the exception of areas developed for high public use, including but not limited to County Parks.

The Jackson County Code of Ordinances regulates activities relating to hunting and trapping. Refer to Chapter 1000 for a full text of the Ordinance. In general the following activities are regulated:

1. Tree stand and ground blind use
2. Game cameras
3. Closed areas

930.2 FISHING

All lakes and streams within the forest are available for fishing unless otherwise listed in state regulations.

930.3 PICNICKING / DAY USE

Picnicking and other day uses, outside of established facilities is allowed. The Jackson County Code of Ordinances also regulates day use. In general, the following activities are regulated:

1. All litter, trash or rubbish must be removed
2. Cutting or harvesting vegetation is not permitted
3. Fires may not be left unattended unless the ground is 100% snow covered

930.4 CAMPING

A permit is required to camp outside of developed campgrounds on the County Forest. Permits are available from the County Forestry Office, online, all Park Offices and through several local vendors. Regulations for off-site camping are similar in nature to other activities allowed on the forest. In general, the following activities are regulated:

1. Campfires are prohibited from March 1st through June 1st and may not be left unattended at any time.
2. All off-site camping units must display a valid permit.
3. Only downed and dead wood may be used for campfires
4. Wood may not be brought in from outside a 25-mile radius of Jackson County.

930.5 MOTORIZED TRAVEL

The Jackson County Code of Ordinances (and road and access plan if applicable) regulates motorized uses on the County Forest. The full text of these regulations are included in Chapter 700. In general, the following regulations apply to motorized travel outside of a developed recreational trail system.

1. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on a trail designated closed with a gate, earthen berm, sign, or other closure

2. All vehicles using forest roads or trails must be licensed for road use as defined in Wis Stat. 341. Permits for use of other vehicles may be allowed under a controlled disability access permit

930.7 OTHER USES

Other uses of the County Forest are permitted provided they are not specifically addressed with the County Code of Ordinances. Mountain Biking, Horseback riding, and other non-motorized uses are currently not regulated. The County Board may, at any time, enact ordinances to protect the forest should damage begin to occur.

935 DESIGNATED RECREATION AREAS/USES

Designated recreation includes those uses for which the County provides a trail or facility. The Jackson County Forest has developed sites and areas to accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. The Committee may prohibit other recreation activities that are not compatible with the intent of the developed facilities.

The Committee and Forestry Department has noted a marked increase in demand for recreation facilities. Jackson County may attempt to develop additional facilities and will maintain its currently developed facilities.

935.1 CAMPGROUNDS

1. East Arbutus Park – Located on Lake Arbutus in the Town of Komensky. Has 190 campsites of which 170 have electric hookups. It includes 4 shower houses, one flush toilet, 3 vault toilets, tables, and fire rings, one boat launch with floating pier and parking lot, one disabled access fishing platform, a day use area with beach, playground equipment, sand volleyball court and basketball half court, and a trailhead connection to County ATV/motorcycle trails, including a parking lot and loading ramp. The park also includes a contact station at the park entrance and a maintenance area with one heated shop building (including two cold storage bays), one equipment storage building, and a sign shop.
2. West Arbutus Park- Located on Lake Arbutus within the village of Hatfield. It has 45 campsites of which all have electric hookups. It includes one shower house, one vault toilet, picnic tables, fire rings, a boat launch with floating pier and parking lot, shelter building and a small contact station at the entrance.
3. Crawford Hills Park- Located in Section 36 of the Town of Komensky, about 15

miles east of Black River Falls on Highway 54. The park is located on the ATV/motorcycle/snowmobile trail system. It has 25 camping sites, one set of sealed vault toilets, one shelter house and two parking lots, one with a loading ramp.

4. Spaulding Pond Park- Located in section 31 of Northeast City Point Township, about 5 miles east of the village of City Point. The park has a swimming beach, a parking lot, one set of sealed vault toilets, picnic tables, fire rings and about 25 primitive campsites. This park is leased to the Town of City Point and is managed by the City Point Fire Department.
5. Merlin Lambert Park-Located in section 16 of North Knapp Township about three miles south of Highway 54 on McKenna Road. The park has a boat launch with parking lot, a floating pier and picnic area, 25 primitive campsites, one set of vault toilets, picnic tables and fire rings.
6. Wazee Lake Recreation Area-Located 5 miles east of Black River Falls on Brockway Road. Park facilities include: 12 primitive campsites, a swimming beach, two scenic overlooks, handicap accessible fishing pier, 4 vault toilets, picnic area, shelter building, concession building with flush toilets and 9 miles of hiking and biking trails. There is a contact station at the park entrance.

935.2 SWIMMING AREAS / BEACHES

1. Wazee Lake Beach Area
2. East Arbutus Beach Area
3. West Arbutus Beach Area

935.3 BOAT LANDINGS

As a result of the wide distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall Forest access management plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest primarily for recreational activities. In addition, these water access points also provide water supply points for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structural fires.

The existing water access points will be maintained to provide a place to launch a small fishing boat or canoe. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. These landings are built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

The following public boat access sites have been developed on the Jackson Forest and are open to public use:

1. INDIAN CREEK FLOWAGE BOAT LANDING
2. LARB HILL LANDING
3. EAST ARBUTUS COUNTY PARK
4. MERLIN LAMBERT COUNTY PARK
5. WEST ARBUTUS COUNTY PARK
6. WAZEE COUNTY PARK

935.5.4 Undeveloped Water Access Points

Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe. All new sites for developed water access must be reviewed and approved by the Committee.

935.4 RIFLE RANGE

The Jackson County Forestry and Parks currently has an agreement with the Jackson County Law Enforcement Officers Association (JCLEOA) to provide approximately 5 acres of land for use in sanctioned law enforcement shoots. This range is also made available to Hunter Safety Educators for field training activities.

940 DESIGNATED RECREATION TRAILS

Designated recreation trails are those for which the County provides a designated trail and/or facility. The County currently provides trail systems that accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. The Committee may prohibit other activities on these trails that are not compatible with the intent of the development.

Whenever possible, multiple uses of various trail systems are encouraged and are subject to policy review of the Committee. Wherever possible, attempts will be made to avoid user conflicts. Recreational users, however, will frequently encounter forest management activities instrumental to the existence and future of the County Forest. Trail systems are identified in Chapter 1000.

This trail network provides public access for recreational opportunities on the Forest. An important role of the Forest is to provide sustainable recreational trails that do not cause long-term natural resource damage, and that are compatible with other uses. Management activities adjacent to recreational trails will be evaluated and where practical, buffer strips a minimum of 1 chain (66') will be left to maintain safe visibility for trail users, preserve the aesthetic value, and maintain snow cover during winter months. Exceptions to buffer strips will be made on a case by case basis, and the final decision will be made by the Forest Administrator and County Trail Coordinator. Trail alterations can be made to accommodate the recreational use. The Committee has the authority to open, close or relocate trails. Recreational maps for the trails listed below are in available at the Forestry and Parks Office for the most current addition.

ATV Trail Map

Snowmobile Trail Map

Motorcycle Trail Map

DNR's Trail Signing Handbook will be used as the guide for posting standardized signs and will assist in promoting uniformity for trail signing throughout the county. Only trail signs that provide information for safety, regulations, or trail directions will be permitted. Private and business signs are not authorized on the Forest. All trail signs must be mounted on wooden, metal, fiberglass or composite posts.

940.1 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

The Jackson County Forest is a multiple use forest. Non-motorized recreation trails are a legitimate use of the forest. Design and maintenance of these trails may highlight natural features present on

the Forest, should minimize damage, and reduce user conflict. Trail use and development must be compatible and sustainable with the characteristics of the landscape.

It is the policy of the Committee to manage non-motorized recreation trails on the County Forest.

940.1.1 Hiking Trails

1. Wazee Lake County Park hiking trails.

Jackson County manages approximately 9 miles of hiking trail at Wazee Lake County Park. These trails accommodate hiking and mountain biking in the summer months and snowshoeing, hiking and cross country skiing in the winter months. The County currently provides limited grooming for cross country skiing, but the trails are not “designated” cross country ski trails.

2. East Arbutus Hiking Trails

The County provides 2 miles of hiking trail at East Arbutus County Park. These trails are not maintained in the winter, but open year-round for public use.

940.1.2 Future non-motorized trail systems

The development of additional non-motorized trail systems will include careful consideration of public demand, analysis of user conflicts and potential damage to the natural resource. Trail system development should comply with the Outdoor Recreation Plan goals and be referenced in SCORP or other regional planning documents.

Non-motorized trail systems generally are not supported by statewide grant programs. The County may require proof of an organized club, or user group, with the ability to assist with maintenance and support of the trail and associated facilities. Appropriate trail passes, or other user fees, may be implemented as indicated in Section 915.

940.2 MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

940.2.1 Designated Snowmobile Trails

Designated snowmobile trails are those recognized by the Committee as the official trails within the County. The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Department manages the snowmobile trail system in Jackson County. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance and insurance

obligations between the County and local clubs. The County contracts with the following snowmobile/ATV clubs for trail maintenance:

1. Black River Trail Riders snowmobile club
2. Barnyard Trail Riders snowmobile club
3. Jackson-Trempealeau Ridge runners snowmobile club
4. Hatfield Roadrunners snowmobile club
5. Woodland Riders snowmobile club

These clubs are all part of the Jackson County Snowmobile Alliance (JCSA). The County does not have specific agreements with each club, rather it enters into an agreement with the JCSA to provide reimbursable services and appropriate levels of insurance for such activities.

All groomed snowmobile trails are closed to all cars and trucks unless vehicle use is authorized by Jackson County. When vehicle use is authorized, contractors must maintain the trail in a safe condition, free from debris and equipment, and with a minimum of 3 inches of snow pack. Appropriate signage will be installed by Jackson County staff to warn trail users of vehicles using the trail.

Jackson County snowmobile trails are open from December 15 through March 15 annually depending upon snow cover. Jackson County will consider extensions of these dates depending upon trail conditions. Trails are subject to discretionary closure at any time to protect the integrity of the trail and to ensure public safety.

Jackson County recognizes the following categories of snowmobile trail:

940.2.1.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of snowmobile trail:

State Funded Trails – these are state approved and funded trail miles on designated trails that are part of a statewide network of trail systems. Snowmobile registration fees and gas tax allotments fund grants that support maintenance, rehabilitation and development of

these trails. There are approximately 320 miles of funded trails in Jackson County, with approximately 120 miles on County Forest Lands.

Unfunded Trails – these are segments of trail that meet the eligibility requirements for a funded trail system but have not been included in the grant system due to restrictions on available funding. There are approximately 11 miles of unfunded trails in Jackson County, with approximately 4 miles on County Forest lands. It is recommended that the county continues to apply for grants to include these in the funded system.

940.2.1.2 Trail Maintenance

Jackson County contracts with County Snowmobile clubs to groom the funded snowmobile trail system. The County periodically assists with mowing, grading or other trail maintenance projects as needed”.

The County shall inspect and monitor bridges and other infrastructure on the trail system and attempt to secure funding from grants, or other sources, to periodically replace or rehabilitate as needed.

940.2.1.3 Future Snowmobile Trails

The Committee shall have jurisdiction over any trail development proposals. It is recommended that future trails be considered only after careful consideration of costs, benefits and impacts and as part of a larger planning effort.

Jackson County deems that the existing number of snowmobile trail miles is sufficient to satisfy public demand.

Proposals to relocate trails or to make adjustments to the existing trail system will be encouraged where there are concerns of public safety or environmental damage. Unfunded and club trails should be evaluated for maintenance funding application.

940.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

Designated ATV Trails are those recognized by the Committee as official trails within the County. These may lie on County, private, or other agency lands. Annual agreements outline the operation,

maintenance and insurance obligations between the County and local clubs. The County contracts with the following snowmobile/ATV clubs for trail maintenance. Presently, none at this time.

There are numerous types of designated ATV trail managed by Jackson County.

940.2.2.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of ATV trail. Maps are appended for reference.

1. Funded Winter ATV Trails – A majority of state funded snowmobile trails on the County Forest are also designated and funded as winter use ATV trails. There are approximately 70 miles of winter funded ATV trail managed by Jackson County, with all 70 miles on County Forest lands.
2. Funded Summer ATV Trails – these are trail systems funded for only summer winter use. These trails are open from May 15 – October 15. There are approximately 68 miles of summer use ATV trails managed by the County with all 68 miles on the County Forest.
3. Funded Year-Round Trails - these are trail systems funded for both winter and summer use. There are approximately 68 miles of year-round funded ATV trails managed by Jackson County with all 68 miles on the County Forest.
4. Funded UTV Trails – UTV's, or side by sides, can be allowed on ATV trail systems. Jackson County allows for UTV's on 68 miles of the trail system within the County during the summer months only
5. Funded Route/Hybrid Trails – The ATV/UTV program does not allow for full maintenance funding on ATV/UTV trails that are open to highway traffic (cars, trucks, etc.) ATV trails with this dual use that were maintained and funded prior to August 1, 2012 are still funded at 100% of the annual per mile maintenance rate. Trails funded after August 1, 2012 allow for partial funding under the following categories:
 - 5a. State Trails – Jackson County has entered into an agreement with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to groom and maintain all snowmobile trails on

Black River State Forest property since 2014. The County is currently experimenting with the same for all ATV and UTV trails on the State Forest.

The County generally grooms ATV and UTV trails 1 time per week during the summer months. It takes approximately 24 to 30 hours to groom all of the funded trails in Jackson County. The Black River State Forest has entered into a temporary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Jackson County to groom and maintain all funded ATV and UTV trails on State property. Any permanent contracts or MOU's are at the sole discretion of the Forestry and Parks Committee and are subject to change or cancellation based upon funding and staffing levels.

Jackson County currently has an ATV/UTV Maintenance Plan in place that provides local guidance in maintaining, developing and rehabilitating ATV and UTV trails on County property.

The County shall inspect and monitor trails, bridges and other infrastructure and attempt to secure funding from grants, or other sources, to periodically replace improvements or rehabilitate trail surfaces or bridges as needed.

940.2.2.3 Future ATV Trails

The use and popularity of ATV's and UTV's increased dramatically over the period of the 2006-2020 County Forest Plan. Increased usage of trail systems proved a tremendous need for much higher levels of trail maintenance in order to manage environmental damages.

Adding ATV trails should be done as part of larger planning effort that incorporates considerations for impact on other users and user groups; how future trail systems will be maintained; and impact on the natural resources. New ATV trail systems will only be considered with the following framework:

- "Trails should be designed and planned to connect communities"
- "Loop trails will be discouraged unless part of a larger trail system that connects communities"
- "Dead end trails will not be sanctioned as part of the County ATV trail system"
- "Intensive use areas will not be permitted, (or are recommended)"

- “New trails will only be allowed if they fit within an ATV plan established by the Committee”
- “Trails will only be considered on suitable soils and in appropriate locations

It is critical that trail layout and design is done in such a way as to prevent erosion and soil loss. Trails must be developed to sustainably. For the purpose of this plan, sustainability is defined as follows:

Sustainability – For the purpose of ATV trails, the term sustainability is intended to mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident there are no circumstances where an ATV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and eliminates the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity, causing erosion. Trails should be built with a slight crown and appropriate ditching to allow for adequate and proper water dispersal.

940.2.3 Designated Motorcycle Trails

The County currently allows 26 miles of single-track dual-purpose motorcycles on County Forest land within Crawford Hills County Park. These trails are maintained by the Jackson County Trail Riders motorcycle club. The continued existence of these trails is directly tied to club participation. Jackson County does not have the staff, equipment or financial resources to maintain such a trail system. The County does require an annual pass of \$20/motorcycle for use of the trails. Jackson County does not participate in the State MRP program.

940.3 RECREATION TRAIL PERMITS

940.3.1 Storm Water Discharge

In general, any trail construction or rehabilitation activities that disturb one acre or more of land will require a Storm Water Discharge Permit. There have been instances of inconsistent application of permit requirements statewide. In order to further define the County’s

understanding and implementation of permit requirements, the following current acceptable process will be used for determining when a permit is needed.

- The 1-acre threshold will be determined by measuring/estimated new disturbance or disturbance of previously grassed surfaces.
- Periodic grading of impervious or non-grassed trail surfaces is not considered disturbance.
- Restoration of water filtration/diversion devices, such as sediment traps or catch basins is considered maintenance and not disturbance
- Reconstruction of previously grassed ditch lines as part of trail rehabilitation is considered disturbance.

940.3.2 Chapter 30

Permits are required for bridges or culvert crossings of navigable waterways. These permits will either be classified as general or individual depending on specific site conditions. These permits are not required for culvert or bridge crossings of non-navigable or intermittent streams, nor are they required to install a clear span bridge over wetlands.

940.3.3 Wetland Fill

Permits are required at any time that fill is placed in a wetland. Permits are available to fill small wetlands for recreation trail purposes. Wetland fill must be less than 10,000 square feet and the permit does not require wetland mitigation. Clear span bridge and boardwalks placed on pilings generally do not require a wetland fill permit. Puncheon style bridges do require a permit.

945 RECREATION PROGRAM FUNDING AND GRANTS

945.1 RECREATION AREA FUNDING

Funding for recreation areas is generally fee based and through the sale of timber, gravel, firewood, ice and other goods sold within the park boundaries in accordance with Chapter 14 of the County Code of Ordinances. Aid for Development of Local Parks (ADLP) funding is available for facility development or enhancement but there is normally a very high level of completion for these funds.

945.2 RECREATION TRAIL FUNDING

945.2.1 Non-motorized trail systems

At this time, there is very limited access to any grant funds that will assist with non-motorized recreational trail maintenance. The County relies on recreational camping and entrance fees.

945.2.2 Motorized trail systems

There are numerous grant programs available to offset motorized trail system costs. Jackson County utilizes the following funding sources:

1. Snowmobile Maintenance - \$300/mile
2. ATV Summer Maintenance - \$600/mile
3. ATV Winter Maintenance - \$100/mile
4. UTV Maintenance - \$100/mile
5. ATV Rehabilitation - 100% grants
6. ATV Development - 100% grants