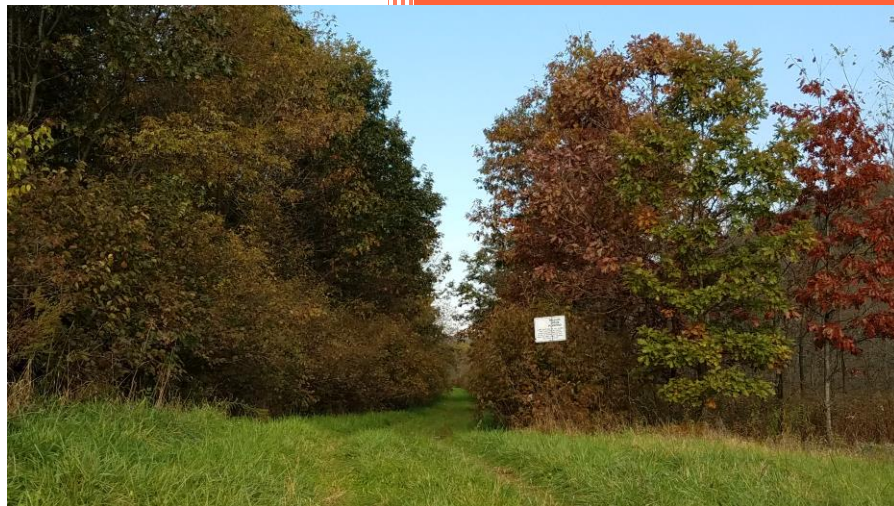


Richland County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-24



Prepared by:
Richland County Parks Commission

Prepared for:
Richland County Board of Supervisors

With Technical Assistance from: Richland County
County Conservationist
26136 Executive Ln, Suite C
Richland Center, Wisconsin, 53581

RESOLUTION NO. 20 - 22

A Resolution Adopting An Updated Outdoor Recreation Plan For Richland County.

WHEREAS Richland County has an Outdoor Recreation Plan which serves as a guide for making future decisions relating to the expansion and development of needed recreational areas in the County, and

WHEREAS the Outdoor Recreation Plan needs to be updated and amended from time to time in order to effectively meet the ever-changing recreational needs of the public, and

WHEREAS County Conservationist Cathy Cooper has prepared an updated Outdoor Recreation Plan and the County Parks Commission has carefully reviewed that updated plan and the Commission is now seeking County Board approval of it.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Richland County Board of Supervisors that approval is hereby granted to the updated Richland County Outdoor Recreation Plan, a copy of which is on file in the County Clerk's office, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is hereby requested to provide continued eligibility to Richland County for participation in various recreation cost-sharing programs administered by DNR, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall be effective immediately upon its passage and publication.

VOTE ON FOREGOING RESOLUTION

AYES _____ NOES _____

RESOLUTION Adopted

Victor V. Vlasak
COUNTY CLERK

DATED February 18, 2020

RESOLUTION OFFERED BY THE COUNTY BOARD
SUPERVISOR MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY PARKS
COMMISSION

FOR AGAINST

<u>[Signature]</u>	X
<u>[Signature]</u>	X
<u>[Signature]</u>	

STATE OF WISCONSIN)
)SS
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)

I, Victor V. Vlasak, County Clerk in and for the County of Richland, do hereby certify that the above resolution is a true copy of the original adopted by the Richland County Board of Supervisors at the February meeting held on the 18th day of February, 2020.

Victor V. Vlasak
Victor V. Vlasak
Richland County Clerk

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose of the Plan	2
Goals and Objectives	3
Planning Process	5
Description of Process	5
Amending the Plan	6
Summary of Past Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans	8
Description of the Planning Region	9
Physical Characteristics of the Region	9
General Characteristics of the Region	10
Standards for Park and Recreation Planning	13
Recreational Facility Development	15
Goals and Priorities Identified in SCORP	16
Existing Recreation Supply	18
Land-Based Activities	18
Water-Based Activities	23
Inventory of County Park and Recreation Facilities	25
Historic Sites	32
Scientific and Natural Area	34
Recommendations for Improving County's Parks and Recreation Facilities	36
Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Schedule	37
Maintenance and Operation Schedule	38
Appendices	39
Appendix A- Richland County Recreational Plan Capital Improvement Schedule	39
Appendix B- Richland County Parks Commission Maintenance and Operation Schedule	41
Appendix C- Maps	43
Appendix D- Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines	57
Appendix E- Statewide Priorities That Match Richland County's Priorities	62

Richland County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan

Introduction:

Richland County's role in providing outdoor recreational opportunities is difficult to define clearly because of its intermediate position between the state and federal government and town and community government. In addition, private enterprise often provides recreation opportunities similar to those offered at the county level.

This plan measures the quantity and quality of existing recreation acres and facilities of regional significance, compares these measurements with demands for recreation opportunities, and recommends programs aimed at satisfying significant deficiencies discovered by the analysis. Programs (actions) are proposed only after evaluation of their impact on programs of other agencies (public and private) and their importance in achieving the county's overall objectives.

The county, by virtue of this plan, is attempting to provide an overview of the recreation facilities in the county, as well as to identify some of the recreation needs. One of the goals of the recreation planning process is to come up with a coordinated program that protects public and private investment, insures wise use of natural resources, and provides citizens and their guests with the most pleasurable recreation experiences possible.

Parks can serve a single community, a portion of the county, or the entire county or region and provide area and facilities for outdoor recreation for residents and visitors. Open space can also serve many functions for a county other than recreation, such as the following:

- Preservation of scenic and natural resources
- Flood management
- Protecting the area's water resources
- Preserving prime agricultural land
- Limiting development that may occur
- Buffering incompatible land uses
- Structuring the county's rural environment

In the Richland County Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in March of 2009, the county's vision is:

- To preserve, protect and enhance the quality of life for every resident and visitor as expressed through the comprehensive planning effort of each distinct jurisdiction in Richland County.
- We envision respecting each jurisdictions' creativity, integrity, and independence. We recognize the utmost value that participants have placed on the quality of Richland County's natural resources, agriculture, volunteerism and the commitment to improve opportunities for the county's young people. The county's future will include added opportunities for employment, entertainment, shopping, and tolerance.

- Richland County in 2030 will have cleaner air and water, a more diverse employment base, including small and large businesses that provide recreation, shopping and socializing opportunities.
- Natural Resources, Ecological Features and Recreation: The vision embraces preserving the unique features, hillsides, natural areas and rural flavor of Richland County. Richland County will protect and take steps to ensure clean water for the County. Management and growth of recreational opportunities will attract visitors and new residents to Richland County and provide healthy avenues for plan and tourism.
- Economy, Education: Richland Center will remain the major employment base in Richland County and more employment will be available in the future, as individuals and prospective businesses learn about the work ethic and the quality of life in Richland County. Downtown Richland Center will have renovated attractive buildings full of interesting, small businesses that will provide important shopping and social experiences for residents and visitors. A new metropolitan sewage treatment plant will be built to serve Richland Center that handles industrial expansion and addresses the aesthetic and odor concerns of residents. Commercial growth outside Richland Center will take place in and around the other municipalities and villages. The County will continue to have family farms and non-farm businesses that allow residents to create economic opportunities for themselves. These businesses will be consistent with and enhance the rural character of the area with an appropriate transportation system.
- The school districts of Richland County will continue to be independent and a source of community pride and local activity. Each school will identify programs to provide an educated and culturally competent workforce for the future and hands on experience in art, athletics, and technology.
- Government, Attitude: A function of government is to preserve the value of taxable land into the future. The tax base of Richland County will be expanded in 2025 because the jurisdictions and County will ensure that the tax base is protected by controlled growth and good land use decisions.
- Volunteerism will continue to grow among our residents and the increased interaction between all residents will result in a more tolerant, accepting community.

Purpose of the Plan

This plan is an update of the Richland County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2014-2019. The purpose of this plan is to guide the development and improvement of the county's outdoor recreation facilities over the next five years in order to meet the recreational needs and demands of the county.

Policy decisions made by the Richland County Board of Supervisors for park programs and improvements shall be guided by the goals and objectives, and findings and recommendations of

this adopted plan. Actual public policy decisions or choices are contingent on funding sources, new opportunities and ideas, changing growth patterns, budget priorities, and changing county needs and desires. For this reason, the plan should be reviewed annually, and a detailed update such as this should be completed every five years. This will allow the county to set up a course of action for continued improvement of its park and outdoor recreation system.

Goals and Objectives

This section of the plan presents the goals and objectives that are being used to guide the park and recreation program in Richland County. There are four basic goals that address the system of parks, encourage coordinated planning in the operation and improvement of the parks, and promote the conservation/enhancement of natural resources for recreational purposes.

The goals are followed by a listing of objectives. While each of the goals point toward a desired final outcome, the objectives are more specific in terms of listing the types of things that need to be worked on to achieve the goal. The goals and objectives serve as a guide for the preparation of plans for specific improvements, policies, and programs.

Goal # 1: Establish, operate and maintain a county-wide system of parks, open space, recreational trails and routes to meet the needs of county residents to meet the needs of county residents.

Objectives:

- Provide park and recreation facilities that serve various areas of the county
- Provide park and recreation facilities that accommodate various user groups, including the special needs of the elderly and disabled
- Cooperate with the City of Richland Center and recreational user groups to provide canoe/kayak access facilities along the Pine River
- Cooperate with recreational groups and municipalities for safe trails and routes for ATV/UTV, snowmobiles and bicycles
- Rehabilitate Pine River Recreation Trail for ADA compliance
- Refurbish UW trail and update fitness equipment
- Install fitness equipment around the City of Richland Center and the county
- Install bike stands and fix-it stations at key points along the Pine River Recreation Trail and the City of Richland Center
- Install small Parking areas off roads next to the Pine River Recreation Trail for bikers, hikers and snowmobilers
- Increase public and private camping opportunities
- Install well at Viola Park
- Install a new bathroom at the Rifle Range
- Develop primitive parking and kayak port on DNR property along Pine River
- Install flashing crossing signs where Pine River Recreation trail crosses County Highway O
- Mark trails at Ash Creek Community Forest by with colored blazers
- Install kayak port at Pier Park

Goal # 2: Establish a system of county parks that promotes the conservation, protection and

enhancement of natural resources in the county and makes them available for recreation use.

Objectives:

- Consider environmental impacts in locating and developing various types of recreation facilities
- Utilize sensitive environmental areas for passive recreation
- Preserve properties that are environmentally unique or sensitive, whenever feasible
- Preserve properties for wildlife watching
- Enhance and protect streams for good water quality
- Establish Rustic Roads
- Install benches along Pine River Recreation trail
- Install picnic tables at the Orion and Port Andrew's boat landings
- Improve trails at Ash Creek Community Forest
- Install a picnic shelter at Ash Creek Community Forest
- Initiate carry in/carry out policy for garbage at all Richland County Parks

Goal # 3: Establish a system to provide information on recreational sites and activities in Richland County

Objectives:

- Create a master website with links to recreation opportunities in Richland County including links to maps
- Maps available for biking, hiking, snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails and routes
- Information signs along Pine River Recreation Trail
- Information kiosks on different trailheads
- Holding recreation events (i.e. kayak races, PiTri, ATV/UTV events)

Goal # 4: Establish a system that connects county and city parks with neighboring counties trails and routes

Objectives:

- Connect Richland County/City of Richland Center bike trails and routes to the 400 trail and the Greater Sauk trail
- Connect the Pine River Corridor state snowmobile trail to the Sauk County state trail near Bear Valley
- Maintain state snowmobile trails in Richland County which connect to neighboring counties state snowmobile trails

Goal # 5: Operate and improve county park system and recreation facilities in an efficient and organized manner

Objectives:

- Collaborate and support projects proposed by the City of Richland Center.
- Use the county outdoor recreation plan to develop a capitol improvement schedule/budget for guiding future park acquisitions and improvement projects

- Use county, state, federal and private resources to develop and maintain high quality park and recreation facilities
- Partner with Southwest Partners and recreation user groups to make improvements and to exiting parks, trails and routes and to develop new recreation opportunities

Planning Process

This section of the report will give a brief description of the sequences of events that will be taking place during the development of the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. It will also describe the process that can be used to amend the plan.

Description of Process

Richland County has had an outdoor recreation plan for many years. However, there is always a need to evaluate progress and update the plan to meet the future goals of recreation in this county. During the summer of 2019, the Richland County Parks Commission invited recreational users and groups to a meeting to brainstorm "what" should be done over the next five years. A second meeting was held in fall of 2019 to go through the ideas and decide what is to be accomplished and who, how and when are they to be done. The results of these brainstorming meetings which took place on August 21, 2019 and October 30, 2019 are as follows:

- Connecting Richland County/Richland Center bike trails to other Trail systems such as the 400 Trail and Great Sauk Trail.
- Rehabilitate the Pine River Recreation Trail and upgrade for ADA compliance
- Refurbish the UW Trail and add/update fitness equipment
- Install fitness equipment around the community
- Install bike stands and bike fix-it station around the community
- Install small parking areas off highway at key spots to access the Pine River Trail
- Increase camping opportunities, both private and public (viola park and Ash Creek Community Forest, etc)
- Install well at Viola Park
- Improve bathroom at the Rifle Range
- Small picnic shelters along Pine River Trail
- Install picnic shelter on Ash Creek Community Forest
- Improve the trails on Ash Creek Community Forest
- Create a master website, or use existing Parks website, with links to recreation opportunities in Richland County including map links
- Flashing crossing lights at County O where bike trail crosses
- Designating Rustic Roads in Richland County
- Information kiosks on different trail heads
- Benches along Pine River Trail
- Map of roads for biking opportunities

- Holding recreation events like kayak races on the Pine River, PiTri(paddling, biking and running event), ATV/UTV events
- Installing a bridge on backside of Pier Park and installing the new kayak port
- Develop primitive parking and kayak port on DNR property across from County SR
- Picnic tables at Orion and Port Andrews boat landing with concret pads and chained down
- Information signs along pine River Trail
- Birding areas
- Go to carry in/carry out instead of garbage cans/dumpsters
- Install colored blazers on Ash Creek Community forest trails corresponding to trail “color”
- New signage for Akey School Museum

The Richland County Parks Commission will use these talking points in future decisions made by the commission. The commission will also use these priorities to support the Richland Center Parks department and user groups to improve recreation.

The Richland County Land Conservation staff and the Richland County Parks Commission then developed a preliminary draft of the updated comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, based on the recommendations of the Commission and the general public. The parks commission assisted with the preparation of materials pertaining to ADA requirements in each park, a capital improvement schedule for the recommended park improvements, and an operations and maintenance schedule to be included in the appendix of this report.

The updated report was reproduced in draft form and copies given to members of the Parks Commission for their review and comment. After suggesting any minor revisions to the report, the Parks Commission was asked to endorse the draft Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan as their guide for future decisions related to park development in Richland County. They reviewed a proposed resolution to be taken to County Board regarding adoption of the plan. Following this meeting of the Richland County Parks Commission will produce the final report and provide copies to the Richland County Board of Supervisors for their review and comments. The County Board also will be given a copy of the proposed resolution recommending adoption of the plan as the County's official park and recreation plan for the next five year period. Upon adoption, the plan will be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources requesting re-certification for participation in the state's park and recreation cost sharing programs.

Amending the Plan

Plan amendments are common and should be considered part of the planning process. They frequently represent good implementation or plan usage and should be acceptable for consideration by local decision makers. Amendments must follow the same process as when the original plan was prepared. Amendments generally prolong the effectiveness of the original plan.

The process, then, for amending the county's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan may involve a meeting or two with the Richland County Conservationist and the Richland County Parks Commission to develop the recommended amendment(s) to the plan. At the least, there should be

an opportunity for the public to give their input concerning the proposed amendment. This will be done with a full and open discussion of the proposed amendment(s) at a normal monthly commission meeting. Once this discussion has occurred, the commission will develop a draft amendment(s) which will be acted on during an official public meeting. The resulting adopted amendment(s) will be taken to the Richland County Board of Supervisors for final action on the proposed amendment. Once the county board of supervision adopts the amendment(s) to the plan, the amendment(s) and supporting resolution will be sent to the Department of Natural Resources. The Department of Natural Resources will incorporate the amendment(s) into the County's re-certified comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. The plan amendment(s) will not be effective until a letter is received from the Department of Natural Resources indicating their receipt and approval of the amendment(s).

Summary of Past Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans

Richland County had its first Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan prepared in the mid 1970's. Since that time, the plan has been updated on a periodic basis to maintain the county's eligibility for park and recreation cost-sharing funds available through the department of Natural Resources. Many improvements have been made to the county parks since the initial plan was prepared. The last Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for Richland County was prepared in 2015. This five year plan expired December 31, 2019. Several improvements that were recommended in the 2014-2019 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan have been carried out in recent years, as follows:

- Clean the Pine River and develop canoe trips
- Parks budget is non-lapsing account
- Concrete pad was installed at Akey School Museum for the dumpster and porta-potty, sidewalk from County Highway TB to the front door
- Kayak/Canoe launch access at Pier County Park
- Defer any extra or unused budget funds for future developments
- Playground equipment installed at Pier Park
- Well project completed at Pier County Park
- New signs installed a Pier Park and Viola Park
- New sign at Ash Creek Community Forest
- Life jacket kiosks installed at Orion and Port Andrews Boar Landings.
- Many township and county road opened for ATV/UTV use
- Village and City of Richland Center streets opened for ATV/UTV use
- 9 bridges on Pine River trail replaced
- 6 picnic tables replaced at Pier Park
- New aquatic center being built in Richland Center

Description of the Planning Region

This section of the report will give a brief description of some of the social and physical factors affecting future recreational development in southwestern Wisconsin, and Richland County in particular. These factors are important to understanding the county and its recreation needs and potentials.

Physical Characteristics of the Region

Regional Setting

Richland County is located in the five-county area of southwestern Wisconsin. The southwestern Wisconsin region occupies an area of nearly two and one-half million acres in the extreme southwestern corner of Wisconsin. In addition to Richland, it includes the counties of Grant, Green, Iowa, and Lafayette. With the exception of the southeastern two-thirds of Green County, the region falls entirely within the so-called "Driftless Area" of Wisconsin. Because of the lack of glaciations, streams have continued their weathering process, uninterrupted for many thousands of years, resulting in a complete absence of any natural lakes within the region.

Climate

The climate of southwestern Wisconsin is continental and typical of the central areas of a continent in the middle latitudes: winters are relatively cold and snowy with extended periods of rain during the spring and autumn and intermittent periods of hot, humid summer weather. Air temperatures within the county are subject to large seasonal change and yearly variations.

Precipitation in southwestern Wisconsin for the six-month period from April through September falls largely as rainfall and may range in intensity and duration from showers to destructive thunderstorms. The snowfall average for the region is about 40 inches annually. Prevailing winds are westerly in winter and southerly in summer.

Topography

Southwestern Wisconsin is located entirely within the Western Upland, a thorough dissected highland. The average elevation in the region is between 900 to 1,200 feet above sea level, where the area immediately adjacent to the highland averages 600 to 900 feet in elevation. Aside from the Upland itself, the strongest topographic features of the region are the trenches of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers and their numerous branches. One of the most dominant topographic features of the region is Military Ridge. The Ridge is the divide between the north flowing tributaries of the Wisconsin River and the south flowing streams tributary to the Rock and Mississippi Rivers. The entire region, with the exception of the eastern half of Green County and a small portion of southeast Lafayette County, is characterized by rugged, steep-walled valleys and high relief. As mentioned earlier, the region is generally referred to as the Driftless Area which preserves a large sample of what the rest of Wisconsin, as well as the northern and eastern United States, were like before the Glacial Period.

Soils

Throughout the Driftless area, the work of weathering has continued since long before the Glacial Period and has produced a deep mantle of residual soil. This forms a notable contrast with the remainder of the state, where the continental glacier scraped away nearly all the residual soil and left a sheet of transported soil. Generally, the soils of the region have been classified as the Grayish-Brown unglaciated Silt Loam, hilly or steep. These soils were formed from parent materials reflecting native vegetation such as prairie, oak-hickory, forestry, and oak savanna.

Their basic materials include clay residue from weathered limestone, weathered sandstone, loess and stream-laid sand and gravel. The latter occurs in valleys of large streams, while the first three are wide spread. The entire southwest Wisconsin region is covered with a thick blanket of loess (windblown silt and sand). Over most of the region the loess is largely silt and is two to three feet thick. In addition, some sandy areas along the Wisconsin River have active dunes.

Forests

The southwestern Wisconsin region, comprised of Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, and Richland counties, has an area of 2,380,900 acres of which 445,300 acres are classified as forest lands. A breakdown by percentage shows 18.71% of the region is classed as forest land and 81.29% is classed as non-forest land. In addition, there are 149,700 acres of land classed as wooded pasture in the non-forest category.

Water Resources

Two major rivers form boundaries of counties within the region. The Wisconsin River forms the northern boundary flow of Iowa and Grant counties, and the southern boundary of Richland County; and the Mississippi River forms the western boundary of Grant and Crawford counties. In addition, the area is traversed by a number of smaller rivers and streams that flow to either the Wisconsin or Mississippi Rivers. As mentioned above, there are no natural lakes in the region due to the fact that the area was never covered by glaciers. However, there are a few man-made lakes in the region, most of which are located in the state parks and other public recreation areas.

General Characteristics of the County

Geology and Geography

Richland County is an attractive, hilly upland typical of unglaciated southwestern Wisconsin. The rugged topography is characterized by forested slopes and ridges with deep valleys and numerous streams.

The hilly terrain is a product of the dissection of a limestone plateau. In the western portion of the county the Prairie du Chien dolomite remains as a virtual horizontal capping, while in the east and along stream courses the underlying Cambrian sandstone is exposed. Elevations range from 656 feet along the Wisconsin River to 1256 feet in the Town of Bloom. Local relief ranges between 300 and 400 feet.

Surface drainage is adequate over most of the county due to the sloping terrain and the permeable substrata. Marshes are confined to the bottom lands of the west branch of the Pine River, along the mainstream of the Pine River, and along the Mill and Knapp creeks near their confluences with the Wisconsin River. All of the county's waters drain to the Wisconsin River.

Land Use

Agriculture is the predominant land use in the county with about 90 percent of the land being used for that purpose. The remainder of the area is devoted to community development, transportation routes, and other forms of public ownership. Very little of the county's land acreage is devoted exclusively to recreational purposes. However, in the last ten years there has been an upward trend in the recreational farms and homes in the county. The present land use pattern is not expected to change appreciably during the next ten years.

Population

Richland County experienced very little population growth from 1980 to 2010. The population in 1980 was 17,476. In 2000, the population was 18,002. In 2006, the population was 18,125. The population for 2010 is 18,021. It is anticipated that Richland County's population will remain fairly stable over the next five to ten years. According to the 2014-2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy report by Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Richland County has an aging population. It has the highest percentage of people over 65 in the five county region.

Forests

Oaks are the predominant tree species of Richland County followed by hickory and soft and sugar maple. The once abundant American elm has been depleted by Dutch elm disease. The largest tracts of forested land are located in the northern portion of the county on sites generally recognized as being unsuited to farming. Forests protected against grazing and fire, contain good to excellent quality timber.

About one-third of the total land area of Richland County has potential as commercial forest land. Forests are important to recreation as well as to wood-using industries and should be managed for both purposes wherever possible.

Waters

Fishing, hunting, swimming, trapping, canoeing, kayaking, boating and aesthetics are the principal recreational uses of Richland County's surface waters. There is a total of 5,171 acres of surface water in the county, which amounts to about 14 % of its total area. Most of this acreage, or 4,795 acres, is contained in streams or rivers (includes 4,255 acres of the Wisconsin River). The remaining lakes are stream impoundments. Some of the waters in the county are degraded for recreational purposes by varying amounts of pollution and siltation. Other deterrents to recreation are lack of public access, private encroachment on shore lands, and flooding. However, the county's lakes and streams, in general, are high quality and provide a wealth of recreational opportunities for county residents as well as visitors to the area.

Fish and Game

Richland County waters support a good variety of sport fish. The Wisconsin River and its sloughs and oxbow lakes offer pan fish, largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye and catfish. A similar fishery is found in most other warm water streams and lakes in the county, except these waters do not normally contain catfish.

Sixty-nine of the county's streams are considered trout water. In total they provide 237 miles of trout fishing opportunities. Nearly all sixty-nine streams have the capability to produce natural populations of trout and in some cases the natural populations are used to support other streams in Southwestern Wisconsin. The trout fishery in Richland County is considered one of the highest in the state by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Richland County hunters have a wide variety of game to pursue. Whitetail deer and turkey are the predominant species of choice. The county has high populations of both game animals. Other game animals that draw attention are fox and grey squirrels, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and rabbits. The county does have a good population of Canada Geese and local ducks, especially wood ducks. The many streams and wetland areas also are a draw to migratory waterfowl in the fall and spring.

Besides waterfowl, the waters of the county contain muskrat, beaver, mink, and river otters. These are species of furbearers most sought by trappers. Both upland and wetlands provide habitat for numerous small mammals and a wide variety of birds. Although these segments of the county's wildlife population may not always be of interest to hunters, they are of interest to people engaged in nature study, hiking, and sightseeing.

Standards for Park and Recreation Planning

The standards system is a method of assessing an area's outdoor recreation needs. The National Recreation and Park Association developed standards to provide a scale against which the existing recreation system can be measured. Standards can be used to create guidelines for future needs. Typically, standards link park acres to the area's population, or link the number of recreation facilities to the population. In addition, service area standards are also used to determine recreational needs. (Appendix D)

**Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards & Guidelines- 4th Printing, 1990 ISBN: 0-929-581-01-6, Author: Roger A. Lancaster, Printed by NRPA.*

Recreation Open Space Standards

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has endorsed a park and open space classification system which will serve as a guide throughout much of this plan. These standards pertain only to parks, recreation lands, and other open spaces discussed in this plan. Standards can be a good starting point or reference when determining a county's outdoor recreation land and facility needs, however each county's needs are different based on such factors as the county's demographic profile and what types of facilities and outdoor recreation priorities the citizenry deem important. Resident input in the form of surveys and/or public hearings are also important when recreation and park planners look at future development and/or preservation of public lands

NRPA's standards have been modified to more accurately define park, recreation land, and open spaces within Richland County. For example, NRPA recommends that a County Park have a desirable size of 15+ acres. In Richland County, most parks of this nature are in the 5 to 100+ acre range. This has been noted in the definition section below. All parks, recreation lands, and open space under this jurisdiction of Richland County have been assigned one primary classification or code using the following titles and abbreviations: County Park (CP); Linear Park (LP); Special Use Area (SU).

County Park (CP)

Desirable/Typical Size: 5 to 100+ acres

Service Area: 1 to 15 miles

Use: Area of diverse environmental quality. This may be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting or picnicking. It may be any combination of the above depending upon site suitability and community need.

Site Characteristics: May include natural features, such as water bodies and areas suited for intense development. The site has easy access by all modes of transportation.

Linear Park (LP)

Desirable Size: Sufficient width to protect resources and provide maximum use.

Service Area: Not applicable standard

Acres/1,000 population: Variable

Use: Area developed for one or more varying modes of recreational travel or activity such as hiking, biking snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicles, horseback riding, fitness/cross country skiing/snow shoeing, canoeing and kayaking. Use may include active play areas.

Characteristics: Built or natural corridors such as utility or railroad right of way, bluff lines, vegetation patterns and roads that link other components of the recreation system or community facilities such as school, libraries, commercial areas and other park areas. Also, plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, or parkways.

Site Characteristics: Located within the county.

Special Use Areas (SU)

Desirable Size: Variable, depending on type of facility

Service Area: Entire County, or part of the county

Acres/1,000 Population: Variable

Use: Areas for specialized or single purpose recreational activities such as golf courses, boat landings, nature centers, marinas, zoos, conservancies, arboreta, display gardens, arenas, outdoor theaters, gun ranges and downhill ski areas. Also plazas or squares in or near commercial centers, boulevards, or parkways.

Site Characteristics: Located within the county

Recreation Facility Development Standards

Facility standards for the development of recreation facilities are expressed in facility units per population ratio. The purpose of evaluating a recreation system from a facility viewpoint is to determine the amount of needed facility development in each recreation area.

Age, income, and education all contribute to people's recreational preferences, yet facility standards sometimes ignore these variables. Another problem with using standards is that they have been developed primarily for urban communities and have limited application to rural areas.

Despite these problems, facility development standards have a place in recreation planning. County leaders use them to approximate the adequacy of their park systems. A listing of recreation facility development standards, prepared by the National Recreation and Park Association, can be found in the appendix to this report (Appendix D).

Recreation facility development standards serve as an excellent resource guide when local officials are developing a new park or are upgrading an existing recreation area. These standards provide recommendations regarding space requirements for various recreation activities. They also provide recommendations regarding size and dimensions of for each activity, the best orientation to avoid sunlight in the eyes, a recommended service radius for each activity, and other criteria to be considered when location a recreation facility/activity.

Included in the listing of recreation facility development standards located in Appendix D of this report are such activities as softball, football, field hockey, soccer, volleyball, tennis, badminton, ice hockey, archery range, golf-driving range, and running track.

Goals and Priorities Identified in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

The 2011-2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) has several initiatives the State is looking into addressing: public health and wellness, urban access to outdoor recreation and public and private partnerships.

The plan discussed the correlation between the access to outdoor recreation and community health and wellness. It states that accessibility to outdoor recreation has been shown to increase health benefits and physical wellness for local residents, especially in urban environments. It also states that it takes a partnership between the public entities and the private sector to provide facilities and open spaces.

The Richland County plan includes working with the private sector and public entities to increase and support the recreational activities in the county, including in the City of Richland Center. Many of the state goals and actions match some of the Richland County goals.

Goal: Assess, understand and adapt to growing recreation tourism demands and preferences.

Actions: understand the recreation and tourism preferences associated with growing market segments. Identify existing and emerging strategies to evaluate appropriate levels and types of service for expanding user groups. Hold an annual forum on outdoor recreation as part of the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism. Continue collaborations between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism as well as other partners to promote outdoor recreation. Continue to promote and expand the Travel Green Wisconsin program for business connections to the outdoors. Maintain funding for tourism marketing to promote high quality outdoor recreation experiences. Acknowledge the potential issues surrounding climate change adaptation with outdoor recreation and tourism.

Goal: Improve integration of outdoor recreation interests and needs in land owner and other relevant planning efforts.

Actions: Support outdoor recreation access and opportunities on public land by establishing a State Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation. Support and align state agency programs and initiatives to promote the creation, expansion and enhancement of urban parks and community green spaces. Manage state lands and waters within a larger landscape context to conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health. Encourage regional planning efforts for integrated cost-effective use of recreation lands and facilities. Provide education and awareness of how recreation uses can impact the natural resources along with actions to reduce those impacts. Promote the collaborations of public and private recreation opportunities through integrated management planning.

Goal: Continue to provide and enhance public access to Wisconsin recreational lands and waters.

Actions: Continue to develop a statewide interactive mapping system showing all public lands and water access points with the state. Continue to acquire and develop boating access sites to meet public boating needs. Promote awareness of the locations of existing recreation lands, facilities, and opportunities available within a given region. Continue to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities. Support community based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation. Promote sustainable recreation facility design, construction, and

maintenance practices.

Goal: Conserve rural landscapes and forests through partnerships and incentives.

Actions: Support financial and other incentives that increase access to outdoor recreation activities on or across private lands. Encourage large-scale land conservation partnership projects through economic incentives and technical assistance. Support collaborative landscape conservation through competitive processes, including increases in land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), stewardship funding and other programs. Continue to support the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative for habitat conservation and protection.

Goal: Address funding challenges associated with managing Wisconsin outdoor recreation resources.

Actions: Encourage all local governments to develop park and recreation plans for participation in state and federal cost share programs. Provide more cost share opportunities for local governments to develop and maintain recreational lands and facilities. Provide adequate funding to the Wisconsin State Park System to meet the needs of its 4 million visitors a year. Explore new and innovative funding methods for outdoor park and recreation facilities. These methods may include public/private partnerships or cost sharing among many governmental agencies. Increase revenue generating capabilities for outdoor recreation by continuing to update and improve technologies such as automated fee collection systems. Increase the capacity of public lands friend groups to provide and support recreation facilities.

Goal: Promote outdoor recreation as a means of improving public health among Wisconsinites.

Actions: Develop a “Get Fit with Wisconsin Campaign” for public lands and waters that touts the health benefits of using recreational areas and reaches a wide audience of potential users. Educate the public about the health benefits of moderate and enjoyable physical activities such as walking, biking, nature study, etc. Integrate opportunities and incentives for exercise during the workday-give employees 30 minutes a day for exercise, provide exercise equipment, etc. Start a dialogue between public outdoor recreation providers and health agencies to identify other (non-traditional) funding sources for recreational facilities and development. Continue the “Walk with Walker Program” by encouraging citizen to use state parks, forests and trails for health and wellness. Promote the mission of the “governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Health” on informing, promoting and encouraging citizens of Wisconsin to incorporate healthy eating and physical behaviors for a lifetime.

Goal: Establish great urban parks and community green spaces.

Actions: Create and enhance a new generation of safe, clean, accessible and connected great urban parks and community green spaces. Connect people with urban parks, trails and community green spaces. Target technical assistance support to communities as they create and enhance urban parks and community green spaces. Continue to provide funding to communities through the Stewardship Program to acquire and develop local park and greenway spaces. Leverage private community foundations and public funding to increase park acquisitions. Provide funding to restore, preserve and protect historic outdoor facilities for future generations.

Existing Recreation Supply

Recreational opportunities in Richland County are provided by the state, county, communities and private enterprise. The following is an inventory of these resources based on user activities.

Land-Based Activities

Camping

Richland County has an estimated 275 camping units, the quality of which varies from one area to another. Private enterprises provide the highest quality campgrounds (electricity, flush units and showers). They represent about 50% of the units. Both the Richland County Fairgrounds and Viola Banker Park have higher quality campgrounds (electricity, flush units and showers), than the remainder of the public campgrounds which are primitive.

Campground Inventory of Richland County

Name	Type of Ownership	No. of Units
Alana Springs	Private	30
Cazenovia Memorial Park	Village of Cazenovia	6
Eagle Cave Natural Park	Private	50
Fireside Campgrounds	Private	60
Pier County Park	County of Richland	10
Richland County Fairgrounds	County of Richland	100
Viola Banker Park	Village of Viola	18
Viola County Park	County of Richland	6
Total		280

Picnicking

Picnicking supply is difficult to determine since a picnic table per se does not necessarily reflect the recreational opportunity. Every local park that is mentioned has picnic tables, but the number fluctuates with use of movement by need or other reasons. It should be noted that nearly all the parks provide additional recreation activities other than picnicking.

Picnic Areas in Richland County

Name of Area	Type of Ownership
Akey School Wayside	County of Richland
Boaz	Village of Boaz
Cazenovia Memorial Park	Village of Cazenovia
Eagle Cave Natural Park	Private
Elephant Trunk Rock	Private
Fireman's Village Park	Village of Lone Rock
Garrison/Battery Park	Village of Lone Rock
Gillingham Town Park	Town of Marshall

Gotham Bicentennial Park	Town of Buena Vista
Highway Wayside (Highway 14)	State of Wisconsin
Highway Wayside (Port Andrews)	State of Wisconsin
Ithaca Lions Park	Ithaca Lions Club
Krouskop Park	City of Richland Center
Minor Hill Trails Park	City of Richland Center
North Park	City of Richland Center
North Park-North	City of Richland Center
Northlake Park	City of Richland Center
Orion Boat Landing	County of Richland
Patterson Park	Village of Lone Rock
Pier County Park	County of Richland
Richland County Fairgrounds	County of Richland
Strickland Park	City of Richland Center
Twin Bluffs Picnic Area	Private Owner
Viola Banker Park	Village of Viola
Viola County Park	County of Richland
Wedgewood North Park	City of Richland Center
Wedgewood South Park	City of Richland Center
Westside Community Park	City of Richland Center
Yuba Community Park	Village of Yuba

Golfing

The privately owned Quail Run Golf course provides golfing facilities for residents of the county. The nine-hole course is open to the public. Fees vary with the season. Other nearby golf courses are located at Spring Green, Viroqua and Reedsburg.

Tennis

The UW-Richland Campus and Krouskop Park both have two tennis courts which are open to the public.

Sightseeing

Richland County's system of public highways offers exceptional sightseeing opportunities. Visual amenities include the Wisconsin River, agrarian landscape, and unglaciated terrain that features rock outcroppings, bluffs, forests and streams. All of these are revealed to their fullest along the highways and major watercourses of the county.

Horseback Riding

Richland County has approximately four miles of undeveloped horseback trails at Ash Creek Community Forest. The site includes adequate parking and turn around area for trailers. Most of this county's horseback riding is done on private property or on shoulders of lightly traveled secondary highway. The high proportion of horses to people suggests a need for trails and facilities for this

activity.

Hiking and Nature Study

Both of these activities can take place without assistance from developed facilities. When facilities are provided, however, enjoyment is normally heightened. There are various trails located in the county that are available for hiking and nature study. The Pine River Recreational Trail is a primary trail for hiking and nature study in the county. Other nature trails are located at Pier County Park, Eagle Cave Natural Park, Ash Creek Community Forest and several other trails in the Richland Center Parks System.

The Pine River Recreational Trail between Richland Center and Lone Rock was officially dedicated in May of 1997. The multi-purpose trail is used by bikers, hiker and snowmobiles. It is 14.8 miles long and includes 15 bridges. The trail passes through lowland hardwood forests, cattail marshes, tamarack bogs, dry land prairies and jack pine barrens.

This trail continues for approximately three miles through the City of Richland Center and ends at beautiful Krouskop Park. This trail will take you past the Richland Center Shopping center area and numerous eating and drinking establishments. Halfway through the three mile stretch is a resting area with shelter, which is adjacent to Wedgewood North Park. Here the Richland Center walking and nature trails begin. This trail winds along the river for about three miles and ends at Krouskop Park. Along this trail, you will find five fishing platforms and will view many of the plants and wildlife native to this area. Along this trail you will also find the Richland Center Arboretum and the Occoch Prairie.

The City of Richland Center also have several small hiking trails near the Pine River which are great for hiking and nature study. The Wedgewood North Trail is a small loop north of the Wedgewood subdivision between Wedgwood Drive and U.S. Highway 14. The Wedgwood South Trail is south of the Wedgewood subdivision between Bohmann Drive and the Pine River. The trail runs behind Doudna Elementary School. The Industrial Bowens River Trail goes along the Pine River between Industrial Drive and Ends before County Highway AA. These trails offer views of the Pine River.

Minor Hill Park and Trails (50 acres & 3 miles of trails)

Minor Hill Bluff overlooks the city from its east side. The bluff features several trail that take hikers to five scenic overlooks, wooded areas, open meadows and an old quarry sited. The trailhead is on Court Street, where a parking area is provided. All trail overlooks are railed and the trail itself is complete with signs. Several improvements were made to this park in recent years, including the addition of picnicking facilities, improved fencing and the opening up of new areas for scenic overlooks. Plans are being made to improve the picnic area and to promote this area for hiking and picnicking.

The City of Richland Center- Arboretum

This arboretum was established in 2—3 with marching funds from an Urban Forest DNR Grants. At that time, 134 trees were planted. Since then, the arboretum has been expanded to include 200 trees and 65 different varieties. The arboretum is located along U.S. Highway 14 near the City's Utility

Buildings next to the Pine River and along the Pine River Recreational Trail. The arboretum is designed for self-guided tours seven days per week. Each tree is labeled with a brief explanation.

The City of Richland Center- Prairie

The City of Richland Center has reclaimed the old Mill Pond area after the dam was removed in the early 1990's. This area has been overrun with Reed Canary Grass. The city has treated this invasive species and has planted a variety of prairie grasses and flowers. In additions, they have constructed a wildlife scrape, walking trails and fishing platforms throughout the 41 acre area. Plans are to plant additional flowers, trees and shrubs to attract birds, wildlife and other nature attraction and to construct viewing areas off the Pine River Recreational Trail.

Trails

The natural trail at Pier County Park is 0.5 of a mile long. The trail at Eagle Cave Natural Park is 1.8 miles long. Ash Creek Community Forest has over 4 miles of hiking trails. The UW-Richland Campus has a 1.5 mile walking trail. The City of Richland Center uses about 3 miles of walking and hiking trails that follow the dike system through the community.

Nature study and observation is a popular pastime for boaters, canoeists and kayakers. Many of the county's most interesting natural areas are located adjacent to the Pine, Kickapoo and Wisconsin rivers.

Bicycling *

The Pine River Recreational Trail is the longest designated bicycle trail in Richland County. It is 14.8 miles long and connects Richland Center with Lone Rock. The City of Richland Center has about three miles of bike trails that follow the dike system throughout the community. The Ash Creek Community Forest has four miles of mountain bike trails for public use. Participants in this activity can also utilize the good primary and secondary highway network in the county. Bicycling, as used herein, refers to recreational biking experience of more than two hour's duration.

*Alternative Transportation Plan

Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

Snowmobiling is the most important winter outdoor recreation activity in Richland County. The county is served by a system of trails developed in cooperation with the snowmobile clubs of Richland County. Some of the trails were developed with cost-sharing assistance from the Department of Natural Resources and are open to the general public. Other trails are developed solely for the use of snowmobiles club members and are not public trails. Richland County has over 125 miles of State approved and funded snowmobiles trails. The plans in the next five years are to expand the trail to 140 miles of trail by connecting another section of trail in the near future.

The interest in developing all-terrain vehicle trails in Richland County is growing. Two clubs have formed, one in the Lone Rock area and the other in the Cazenovia area. Presently they operate club trails on private lands and designated township roads. In the near future, these groups would like to expand the ATV trails system to public use and obtain state funds to develop and maintain these trails.

At the present time their trail system is limited to three towns in Richland County. It is their goal in the next five years to actually establish an ATV trail that connects the major villages in Richland County and receive State funding to support the development and maintenance of the trail system. They would like to see the trails connect with trails located in other counties.

Hunting

The Department of Natural Resources provides thousands of acres of land for the purpose of hunting and propagating wildlife. Some of these lands are owned by the state and others are leased. Species of game found on these lands include ruffed grouse, whitetail deer, rabbit, squirrel, turkey and a variety of waterfowl. Considerable hunting in the county takes place on privately owned land at the discretion of the landowners. Richland County landowners are generally cooperative with those who ask permission. The species of game sought on privately owned land and public lands are alike. Public hunting is allowed at Ash Creek Community Forest.

Target Shooting (Rifle and Archery)

The Richland County Rifle Range satisfies most of the demand for this type of recreation in the county. The facility is located about three miles northeast of Richland Center on approximately seven acres of land. It is county owned and operated and offers good rifle and pistol shooting with targets situated at 25, 50, 100 and 200 yards.

The local sportsman club operates an indoor shooting range in the community of Richland Center. It is a 25 yard range and is open to members. They moved to the current indoor range in 2013 from an older indoor range. This organization has plans of purchasing land to develop a 1000 yard rifle range which will be open to club members and the general public. They hope to achieve this in the next ten years.

The local archery club has a target range just outside of Richland Center which is open to members. The course includes trails, platforms and targets. The outdoor range is open spring, summer and fall. At this point, there are no plans to expand the archery capabilities of this county.

Skiing and Snowshoeing

Cross-county skiing and snowshoeing have gained some interest in the last couple of years. These activities do not require deep snow or special terrain. The activities do require adequate space and a light snow cover. The only trails available for these activities are located at the Ash Creek Community Forest and the UW-Richland Campus. The hiking trails at these locations can also be used for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. There are plans to establish a cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trail just north of Richland Center, which will utilize private property by agreement and City owned property. The future loop may be a 6 to 8 mile trail.

There are plans to construct a three mile round trip hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country ski trail along the Pine River in the north part of the City. The trail would include resting and fishing platforms. An area for parking is planned. The idea of adding a dog exercise area and a pet cemetery is also a future consideration.

Water-Based Activities

Fishing

The State of Wisconsin has overall responsibility for managing fishery resources. It shares with the county and other units of government responsibility for providing public access to the resources and for adoption and enforcement of measures that will protect the resources from degradation.

Access to fishing waters has been good mostly because private landowners have taken a tolerant attitude toward fishermen. This attitude may change as land changes hands and the number of fishermen increase.

Richland County has approximately 4,727 acres of surface waters suitable for fishing, including 4,255 acres of the Wisconsin River in times of normal flow and 472 acres of small streams. Richland County has one lake of any size, which is Lee Lake in Cazenovia. This lake is approximately 40 acres in size. Richland County has over 260 miles of trout streams located within its boundaries. With this volume of trout water, it is planned to expand public access to these streams through the purchase of easements or land use agreements with local landowners.

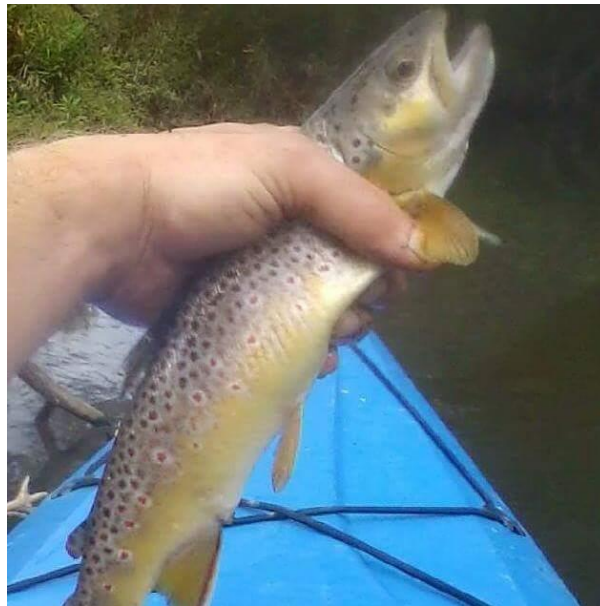


Photo Courtesy of Mark McCauley

Boating, Water-skiing and Jet Skiing

The Wisconsin River and Lee Lake offer limited water skiing and jet skiing opportunities. Jet skis and hovercraft are used on the Wisconsin River at the present time.

Canoeing and Kayaking

There are approximately 64 miles of waters in Richland County suitable for canoeing and kayaking. The Canoeing and kayaking resources consist of the Wisconsin River (26 miles), Pine River (18 miles), Mill Creek (14 miles) and the Kickapoo River (6 miles). Although navigation of these streams

generally does not require a high level of canoeing or kayaking expertise, the sometimes deceptive currents of the Wisconsin River can provide an element of risk. In addition, log jams and brush sometimes pose navigation problems in some rivers. A lot of effort recently has gone into cleaning out the Pine River between Rockbridge in Pier County Park and the City of Richland Center. Kayakers and some canoers are traveling the Pine River in that area. There are efforts underway to clean the log jams and brush from many of our streams, especially the Pine River downstream of Richland Center, to increase the use of our waterways throughout the county.

Canoe and Kayak Ports

The City of Richland Center, in conjunction with an Eagle Scout Project, has built 4 canoe/kayak ports and resting areas from the North side of the city to the South side. This is around eight miles of river and will take approximately four hours to paddle. In the next five years, there may be a few more ports located between Rockbridge and Richland Center.

Swimming

Natural and good quality swimming beaches are nonexistent in the county. The Wisconsin River is used for swimming but currents and shifting sandbars make this a very hazardous activity. The City of Richland Center is currently replacing the outdoor pool with an aquatic center. They plan to open it in the summer of 2020. The aquatic center includes a zero entry pool, swim lanes, diving area, slide and a lazy river. This aquatic center will accommodate a considerable portion of Richland County's swimming demands in the summer. In addition, Symons Recreational Center, a multiple use recreational facility located on the UW-Richland Campus, is open to the general public and provides various swimming programs to serve all age levels and interests year round. This facility is owned and operated by the City of Richland Center and Richland County.

Inventory of County Park and Recreation Facilities

To determine what courses of action county officials must take to provide a comprehensive recreation program, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of existing areas and facilities in meeting demands for recreation. The following inventory is for that purpose.

Akey School Museum (Wayside)

Akey School Museum (wayside) is located in the Town of Orion in the southeastern part of the county, on County Highway TB, on one acre of land. The facility is operated in partnership with the Richland County Parks Commission and the Richland County Historical Society. Akey School is a one room school replica and museum. The building was moved onto this site in 1916. The museum was created during 1975-76 as a project associated with the Bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence. On Sunday afternoons during the summer, it is open to the public and provides a wayside for travelers when it is not open. The facility includes two picnic tables, pull off parking for five to six cars and a portable toilet.

Future Developments: New signage



Akey School Museum, Photo Courtesy of Cathy Cooper

Ash Creek Community Forest

The 359 acres known as the Ash Creek Community Forest started out as an important component of the Pine River Public Law (PL) 566 project as a Flood Preventions and Protection Project. It was commonly known as Pine River PL 566 project site #2.



Photo Courtesy of Cathy Cooper

The emphasis of the Pine River PL 566 project was to provide watershed protection, flood prevention, and fish and wildlife improvement in Richland County. The letter of authorization was signed in 1975.

The project propose nine different water retention structures. Seven of the structures were dry dams, which stored water during large rainfalls. Two of the structures were wet structures which would store water for multiple uses, including flood protection. Site #2 was a wet structure.

In the 1974 project plan, Site #2 was planned as a 50 acre lake. The storage capacity of this wet structure would have been 803 acre feet. Site #2 was projected to be 40 feet deep.

Richland County made plans for Site #2 by purchasing property from Ed Mutch, Saloma Barry and Earl Mayfield in the early 1970's. The total land purchased at this time was 276 acres. In the mid 1970's, the other 83 acres were purchased from Henty Kittle. This brought the total acreage to 359 acres.

In the late 1970's, the Public Law 566 program went through some major changes. One change was a movement away from water retention structures and the other was degrading water quality. Site #2 became a victim of these new policies, and there was some questions about the structure's stability due to the site's limestone foundation. The watershed plan indicated that the water quality would be poor and it would not sustain a trout population. Moreover, the trout fishery would suffer downstream of Site #2. Amidst controversy between agencies, all the structural projects were abandoned and replaced by a dike and upland projects.

Site # 2 is managed by the Richland County Land Conservation Department. They rented the cropland, nearly 70 acres of tillable acres, for over ten years. They also had plans to develop a campground with 40 sites. This was to include a shelter and restrooms. But due to lack of development support, these improvements never became a reality.

In 1990, the county discussed the possible sale of the property. With community support, this proposal was defeated. Shortly after this action, Richland County enrolled the property at Site #2 in the Community Forest Program. The name of the property was formally changed to Ash Creek Community Forest. The county also started a tree planting program on the property.

In 1991, when the Land Conservation Department could not find anyone to rent the 30 acres of cropland located in the valley, the county enrolled the cropland into the Conservation Reserve program. The acreage was enrolled for 15 years. The remaining 40 acres of ridge land was enrolled in the CRP program in 2000.

The County developed its first long range plan in 1992. It included tree planting, development of trails, upgrading the fence around the property, managed tree harvesting, expansion of the parking lot and pit toilets. The plan was updated in 1997 to include stream bank improvement, fish habitat improvement structures, invasive species control, improved signage and stream crossings.

In November 2019, a new sign was installed at the Highway 80 entrance. This sign includes a color coding of all trails. The trails were temporarily marked with tree paint and the plan is to mark the trails with blazers in 2020 and 2021.

The present facilities at the site include: two parking lots with the capacity of 10 cars each, three miles of horse riding trails, four miles of hiking and biking trails, three miles of class one trout streams. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the property. It is open to hunting and fishing in season.

Future developments: new signs for all trails, upgrade the road access to the property, install a small parking lot off of Hillview Road, manage the invasive species on the property, pit toilets, picnic shelter, forest management, prairie maintenance and trail maintenance.

Community Forest in the City of Richland Center

The City has put their 450 acres of Community Forest in the State Community Forest Plan. This enables the city to use resources for managing this forest. Plans are being made to harvest mature time on two of the five sites. The other three sites will be harvest at future dates. Recreation trails are established on two sites, with the third being planned.

Historical Sites

Areas, events and items of historic interest are important components of community or county recreation programs. Several sites of historic interest were noted in the course of the Richland County Comprehensive Planning Process. The following list of such sites is by no means complete nor is the available information necessarily indicative of the sites significance. The list is provided to serve as recognition for significant sites in the county.

- Little Brown Church in Bear Valley, which was erected in 1875. It is of wood construction and is in good state of repair despite only intermittent use. A cemetery of some antiquity also occupies the site.
- Elephant Trunk Rock, a unique rock formation, found just north of Ithaca along State Highway 58.
- Steamboat Rock, a unique rock formation, found on County Highway SR north of Richland Center.

- Many Native American burial mounds located along the Wisconsin River, following the State Highway 60 corridor between Muscoda and Port Andrews.
- The Hub City Bog is recognized a significant scientific area. The bog is about 55 acres and is located just north of Hub City on Soules Creek Road.
- The Lower Wisconsin Management Areas, located on the southern border of Richland County, has over 4000 acres of state owned property along the Wisconsin River.
- Frank's Hill effigy mounds, located east and west of State Highway 193. These effigy mounds were built by the Mound builders between 700 and 1200 A.D.

Orion Boat Landing

Orion Boat Landing is located south of Richland Center in the Town of Orion on State Highway 60 between Muscoda and Gotham. This site is about two acres in size. It was constructed in the early 1970's. The site has a small parking lot that was resurfaced fifteen years ago. The landing launches boats into the Wisconsin River. The launch is designed for one boat at a time. There is parking for up to 20 cars. It is a very popular canoe entrance point to the Wisconsin River. The site has a set of primitive pit toilets which are not ADA accessible.

Future Developments: 2picnic tables, two ADA accessible portable toilets, update the pavement on the parking lot, new signage.

Pier Natural Bridge County Park

Pier Natural Bridge County Park is located on a tract of land given to Richland County by the heirs of W.H. Pier, a prominent early citizen of the area. The park is located 10 miles north of Richland Center on Highway 80 in the town of Rockbridge. It is presently ten acres in size with future plans of adding additional land by long term lease or donation. It has been developed both for recreational purposes and to preserve the natural beauty. The unusual geologic feature of the park consists of a half-mile long "finger" of blocked and layered sandstone rising about 60 feet above the floodplain of two merging valleys. This narrow finger is topped by tall pines and covered with green shrubs. It has an opening through which the West Branch of the Pine River flows, making a natural bridge.

Early development of the park began in 1922. Local residents constructed a foot bridge across the Pine River near the natural bridge. Picnic tables were made and steps were constructed by the natural bridge to climb to the top of the rock. After a few years of successful use, flood and neglect destroyed their efforts and the great flood of 1936 carried away the foot bridge and a metal bridge that had been built beside it. Many year of neglect and misuse followed.

Later, efforts were made to have the park become the property of the State of Wisconsin. In 1955, a county recreation committee was successful in having the tract accepted by the Richland County Board of Supervisors as a county park. With the change of the highway and river by the State Highway Department, an opportunity for improvement presented itself. New Steps, a well and picnic shelters were added. The Richland Center Lions Club helped provide playground equipment.

The idea of having a tunnel through the rock to connect the two sides of the property and to give an opportunity to see the Natural Bridge from both sides had long been under consideration. In June of 1967, an 80 foot tunnel was blasted and excavated through solid sandstone and a walkway was created. It is an attractive part of the park giving quick connection between the two valleys.

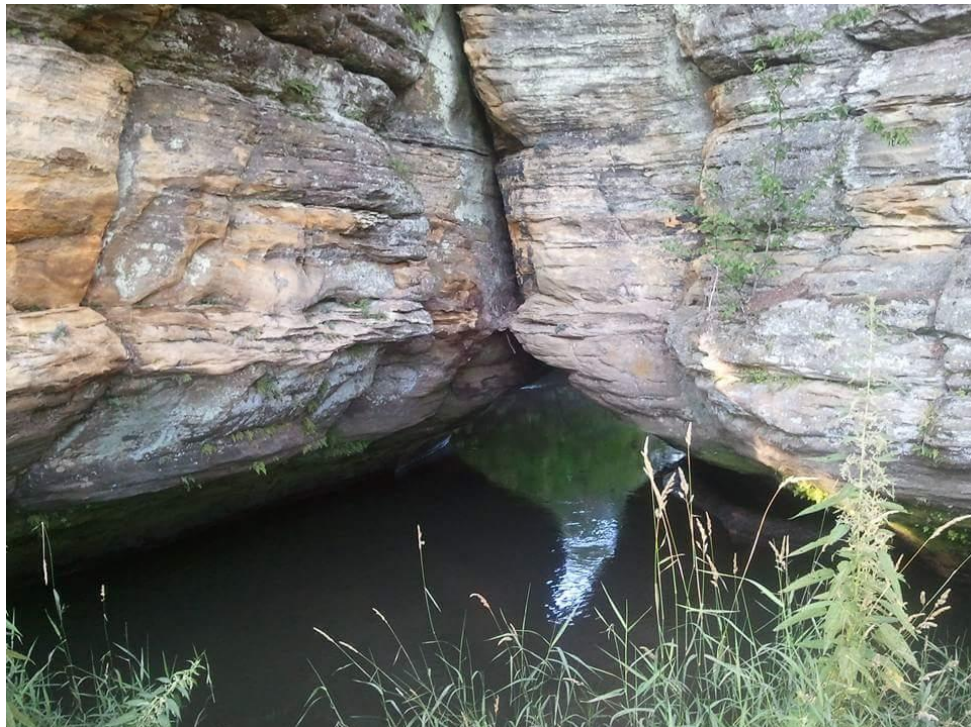
Other facilities at the park include: Primitive camping (six sites), two parking lots, a half mile walking trail, primitive pit toilets which are not ADA accessible, two shelter facilities with the capacity for 20 people each, an electric well for fresh water, a playground and a canoe/kayak launch. Two historic markers are located at this park.

In 2016, new steps were installed on the west side of the park by an Eagle Scout and some Boy Scouts.

In 2017, new playground equipment was installed.

In 2019, 6 new picnic tables were purchased.

Future improvement plans for the next 5 to 10 years: Add 4 heavy duty recycled picnic tables, repair and flood proof the foundations to both shelters, expand the walking trails by purchase or lease arrangement, replace primitive toilets with flood proof ADA accessible toilets and shower facilities, Install a small bridge over stream on west side of park, repair canoe/kayak port, provide campfire pits to each designated campsite in the park and find a space to house artifacts found at the site.



Natural Bridge at Pier Park, Photo Courtesy of Mark McCauley

Pine River Recreational Trail

In late 1988, the use of the railroad line between Richland Center and Lone Rock dropped to an occasional engine. The lack of use was caused by financial conditions of the Wisconsin and Calumet Railroad Company and the poor conditions of the railroad corridor itself.

In early 1989, the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission, the management group for the Department of Transportation, started a discussion concerning abandonment and/or development for recreational use.

At this point, the Richland County Parks Commission and the Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission started negotiations concerning the development of the rail corridor as a recreational trail.

In 1992, the Department of Transportation took ownership of the corridor and salvaged the tracks. Also in 1992, Richland County received ownership of the railroad corridor by Rails to Trails Action. With the support of many recreational organizations the County made application for a Statewide Transportation Enhancement Grant to build a recreation trail. The grant was awarded in 1994 in the amount of \$178,000. Also in 1994, the Rails to Trails action was finalized. The work on the trail started in the spring of 1996 and was open to the public in May of 1997.

The Pine River Recreational Trail starts at Fireman's Park in Lone Rock and follows the old railroad corridor to the intersection of County Highway O. The multi-purpose trails is used by bikers, hikers and snowmobilers. It is 14.8 miles long and includes 15 bridges. The trails passes through lowland hardwood forest, cattail marshes, a tamarack bog, dry land prairies and jack pine barrens. The trail has one rest area with a portable toilet at Twin Bluffs.

In 2012, four of the bridges were repaired with financial assistance of DNR grants.

In 2018, five of the bridges were repaired with financial assistance of DNR grants

Future Developments: New signage, repair of bridges, develop another rest area in Gotham, add crushed limestone to the trail.



Pine River Recreational Trail, Phot Courtesy of Cathy Cooper

Port Andrews Boat Landing

Port Andrews Boat landing is located southwest of Richland Center in the Town of Richwood off State Highway 60 in the unincorporated area of Port Andrews. The boat landing was constructed in the early 70's. This site is about one acre in size. It has parking capacity for 20 cars. The landing launches boats into the Wisconsin River. The launch is designed for one boat at a time. The landing was repave a few years ago. The Site has no toilet facilities.

Future Developments: 2 picnic tables, new signage

Richland County Fairgrounds

The Richland County Fairgrounds is located north of Richland Center on County Highway AA. It is 39 acres in size, with about half of it in the flood plain or flood fringe. The site has seen many improvements in the last ten years. The Fairgrounds has been connected to city sewer. This has allowed for the construction of a new ADA bathroom facility with showers. Other improvements include the addition of 70 campsites with electrical hookups. These are not standardized sites, but are located near electrical outlets congregated in specific locations on the grounds. The site does have running water and numerous out buildings. A couple of open sided shelters have been added to the parking lots for use at special events.

Future Developments: install underground electrical, upgrades to existing building.

Richland County Rifle Range

The Richland County Rifle Range is located two miles north of Richland Center just off County Highway SR on Cooper Hill Road. It is approximately nine acres in size.

The Richland County Rifle Range was constructed in 1970 as a joint partnership with the Richland County Parks Commission, the Pine River Sportsman Club and the local law enforcement groups. The present shelter building and storage garage was built in 1998 after a fire destroyed the original shelter and storage garage. The facility has a couple of picnic tables, six shooting benches and a primitive pit toilet, not ADA accessible. The parking lots at the site has the capacity for 30 vehicles. The range is set up for shooting distances of 50 yards to 200 yards. It has designated shooting hours. Specialized shoots are managed by the Richland County Sheriff's Department.

Future Development: new signage, upgrade primitive pit toilet to ADA accessible, replace target holders at all distances.

Viola County Park

Viola County Park is located two miles south of Viola on State Highway 56. It is five acres although only two acres are utilized for actual park use. The other three acres are in a natural state. Present facilities at the park include primitive toilets, which are not ADA accessible, a shelter facility with capacity for 20 people and several camping sites, though the area is not designated as a camping area.

Future improvements: Add 6 heavy duty recycled picnic tables, repair the foundation to the shelter, add playground equipment, install a new well, get a license for camp sites, replace pit toilets with ADA accessible primitive pit toilets and develop a tree planting program to beautify the site.

Pine River

Install a canoe/kayak port on DNR property off of State Highway 80 and install a primitive parking lot and 2 picnic tables.

Historic Sites

Areas, events and items of historic interest are important components of community or county recreation programs. Several sites of historic interest were noted in earlier plans and still have relevance in this planning process. The following description of sites is by no means complete nor is the available information necessarily indicative of the sites' significance. The descriptions are provided to serve as a stimulus for further investigations.

The Little Brown Church in Bear Valley was erected in 1875 and is of wood construction. It was completely renovated with the help of matching funds through the Jeffries Foundation. Renovation included erecting a steeple to replace the one torn down, as well as reproduction of the original wallpaper. This non-denominational church did not have an altar and the choir sat in the front. Seasonal services are still held at the church as well as numerous weddings and funerals. Even prior to the building of the Little Brown Church, the association for Bear Creek Cemetery, located on the same property, was established in 1862 and continues to be a place of internment. It is a well-kept cemetery and many visitors stop by looking for ancestry.

At one time, one room schools were the norm in Richland County, to preserve this bit of history. The Richland County Historical Society and Richland County Parks Commission have preserved the **Akey School Museum**. It is a one room school, open to the public the displays turn of the century education and live styles.

The **Frank Lloyd Wright designed German Warehouse** in Richland Center is of unusual construction style. This building has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A non-profit group is now in the process of restoring the warehouse.

The **Richland Center City Auditorium** was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. It represents a unique architectural style in Richland Center. The Richland County Performing Arts Council is in the process of restoring the auditorium.

The **Henry Fiedler House** was added to the National Register of Historic places in 1986 and also represents a unique style of architecture in the City of Richland Center.

The **Richland Center Downtown Commercial Historic District** was added to the National Register of Historic Place in 1989 as a follow-up to the detailed survey of all historic buildings in the City of Richland Center.

A very large number of **Native American burial mounds** have been located and marked along the Wisconsin River and its tributaries. Efforts are underway to preserve these burial sites and to designate these areas as Historic Sites of significance. There are also a large number of effigy mounds. One of the best maintained sited is a place call **Frank's Hill** off of State Highway 193.

The Richland County Courthouse, built in 1889, is among the older in Wisconsin. It is the most important example of Romanesque Revival architecture in Richland Center.

The **Richland Center Local Register of Historic Places**. Walking tour maps of the-commercial district and a potential residential district are available at the Visitor's Center in the city. It includes the following buildings and the year they were added to the list:

- 2009- Robert Craig Burnham house, 263 North Central Ave
- 2009- Fred H. Pratt house, 314 North Central Ave
- 2009- The Robinson Building, 179 East Court Street
- 2008- Jim Keegan home, 565 North Central Ave
- 2007- Dr. Daniel E. Smith Home, 392 North Park Street

2007- Janine Crary home, 516 North Cedar Street
2006- Bowen D. Houck Carriage House, 220 East Union Street
2005- The G.L. Laws House, 484 North Church Street
2005- The W. Fogo House, 265 North Park Street
2005- Trinity United Methodist Church, 400 E Seminary Street
2003- The S.I. Freeborn/John Kirkpatrick House, 209 South Sheldon Street
2002- The Leo Keegan House, 480 North Central Ave
2001- The Park Hotel, 213 South Central Ave
2001- The Masonic Temple (now named Blue Highways), 165 North Central Ave
2000- Barnes & Toms' Jewelry Store, 155 East Court Street
2000- A.A. Bulard Jewelry Store, 155 East Court Street
2000- Peace United Methodist Church, 265 North Church Street
1999- Judge Daniel L. Downs House, 322 North Park Street
1999- Judge Levi H. Bancroft House, 277 North Sheldon Street
1999- Ira Haseltine House, 133 South Grove Street
1998- Richland Center Railroad Depot, 397 West Seminary Street
1998- The Bowen D. Houck House, 200 E. Union Street

For more information contact the Visitor's Center at 608-649-3376

The **Tippisaukee Farm** is just west of the unincorporated village of Port Andrews. John Coumbe, the first white settler in Richland County, chose this site to homestead. Descendants of Mr. Coumbe still operate the farm.

The **Ho Chunk Native American Tribe** purchased a farm in Eagle Township along State Highway 60 to preserve effigy and burial mounds on the property.

Frank Shadewald purchased land on both sides of State Highway 193, "**Frank's Hill**". This land has significant effigy mounds in a linear pattern.

Richland County has a number of historical markers located adjacent to its State Highways. They recognize such things as the finding of a Mastodon skeleton in the Boaz area, the history of unique rock formations in the Rockbridge area, the travel route of Chief Blackhawk during the Blackhawk wars and the unique fauna found in the Wisconsin River Valley to name a few.

Scientific and Natural Areas

An inventory of natural areas in Richland County was undertaken in 1974 by the Wisconsin Scientific Areas Preservation Council. Although many of the sites are private property and have limited public access, they remain just as unique today as when they were inventoried in the mid 70's. The following is a brief description of the sites that were inventoried by the Wisconsin Scientific Areas Preservation Council:

Basswood Ponds: Basswood ponds are a wetland system consisting of open water and cattail marsh along Mill Creek. Several springs fed the system. Migrating waterfowl are common.

Bear Creek Sedge Meadows: This is an uncommon type of wetland in Richland County. It is one of the better sedge meadows remaining. The area is too low to be drained into Bear Creek, which flows along the west edge of the meadow. Cattails are found in a few of the wettest areas.

Button Cemetery Glade: This excellent cedar glade is located on a steep south-facing bluff on the north side of the Wisconsin River valley. Grasses include Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem, side-oats grama and hairy grama. Also present are pasque flower, prickly pear cactus, prairie violet, birdsfoot violet, agoseris, smooth sumac, etc. At the top of the bluff is an exposed sandstone cliff.

Cedar Point Yew Relic: This spectacular outcrop of Jordon sandstone in the valley of Knapp Creek has red cedar on top and yew on the steep northeast side. Several natural bridges occur. There is a large spring at the base of the east end of the bluff. Waking fern occurs on small outcrops below the main mass of sandstone on the northeast side. Typical exposed-cliff flora is present on the southwest side of the outcrop.

Gotham Sand Blows: The sandy terraces of the Wisconsin River have numerous sand blows. This small area near Gotham is fairly typical. Sizable portions of the site are covered with jack pine. The six-lined skink is common. Some of the sand has been stabilized by dry prairie flora. Little bluestem, hairy grama, rock spike moss and prickly pear cactus are common. Hudsonia has stabilized some dunes.

Hein Maple Hills: this is a rich, ungrazed, sugar maple and basswood stand. It is on a steep east-facing hillside in the Pine River Valley on the West edge of Richland Center. It has the typical spring ephemerals.

Hub City Bog: This bog is one of the few of its type in the driftless areas and was formed in an oxbow lake of the meandering Pine River. A 75 foot tall sandstone cliff above Soules Creek contains a number of rare and unusual plants, such as northern bog species of Labrador tea. Many small springs are present in the tamarack stand which is surrounded by open marsh.

Melancthon Creek Hemlocks: Beautiful Melancthon Creek flows along the base of a massive cliff of Galesville sandstone. The cliff faces northwest. It has abundant hemlock and also some white pine. Especially notable at the site is Labrador Tea.

Orion Island: This island is typical of the Lower Wisconsin River. It is covered by will, silver maple, river birch, etc. Poison ivy is common.

Pier Spring Woods: Pier Spring Woods is a very diverse area. A large draw separated two ridges, each with an elevation of about 1060 feet. Each ridge has a prominent north-facing cliff of Jordon sandstone. The west ridge has abundant shining club moss. Most of the area is mesic hardwood forest of sugar maple, basswood, red oak, white ash and ironwood. Where soils are shallow, white oak and hickory are common. These woods have been neither grazed nor logged for many years. The woods has little shrub layer; it is rich in spring ephemerals. A large spring near the entrance feeds Brush

Creek.

Pops Cave: Pops Cave is also known as Big Bear Cave. It is located in Prairie du Chien dolomite. The entrance is in a sink hole 180 feet above U.S. Highway 14. It contains soda straws, helictites, broken stalagmites and considerable breakdown.

Tunnelville Yew Relic: This site is a steep northeast-facing slope in the Kickapoo Valley between Viola and Lafarge. Near the top of the ridge is a shaded rock cliff. Below this cliff is a stand of yew, an unusual conifer in Richland County. Also below the cliff on some small outcrops is walking fern. Most of the site is covered with mixed hardwoods.

Willow Creek Hemlocks: This is a shaded cliff of Galesville sandstone along Willow Creek and State Highway 58. The Cliff faces northeast. It is covered with a typical shaded rock cliff flora. Labrador tea is also present.

Smith Slough and Sand Prairie: The site hosts a shallow seepage fed oxbow lake that has become hydrologically isolated from the river. It is a large undisturbed complex of sedge meadow, shrub-carr and aquatic emergent that grades into bi bluestem dominated sand prairie and swamp white oak savanna on slightly elevated ridges. On the sand terraces along the lake is a narrow band of black oak barren with a ground flora of sedges, big and little bluestem and cream wild indigo. Of note is a plant species of special concern (small forget-me-not) and animal species of special concern (starhead topminnow, goldeye, Blanding's turtle and least darter).

Orion Mussel Bed: This is a narrow corridor of Wisconsin River bottom and adjacent shoreline that is critical habitat for numerous rare animals. Fifteen rare animals are known from this site including pocketbook mussel, monkeyface mussel, wartyback mussels, Higgins' eye mussel, shadowfly, clubtail, Knobel's riffle beetle and Wallace's deepwater mayfly.

Richwood Bottoms: This is one of the best swamp white oak dominated floodplain forests along the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. Swamp white oaks with basswood dominates the low ridges while the flats contain silver maple with American elm, green ash, river birch, hackberry and bitternut hickory. The understory includes buttonbush, cardinal flower, ostrich fern, royal fern, lance-leaf fog-fruit and groundnut.

Recommendations for Improving the County's Park and Recreation Facilities

The following recommendations for improvement by the Richland County Parks Commission follow the proposed Capital Improvement Plan (Appendix A). These recommendations will be completed based on availability of County Funding and grant availability.

The Snowmobile Trails and proposed all terrain vehicle trail development activities will be mentioned

here, but since there are grant funds for development, they will not be mentioned in the Capital Improvement Plan nor the Maintenance Plan.

Akey School: Signs and maintenance

Ash Creek Community Forest: Install a gravel parking lot off of Hillview road; Primitive pit toilets; Picnic shelter; forestry management; invasive species management; New signs on all trails.

Fairgrounds: Install underground electrical; Upgrade existing buildings to ADA standard.

Orion Boat Landing: Provide two new picnic tables; New signs.

Pier Natural Bridge Park: Replace four picnic tables; Replace 4 fire pits/rings; Repair and flood proof both shelters; Update pit toilets to ADA standards; repair a kayak launch.

Pine River Recreation Trail: New signs on trail; Repair and update three bridges; Add crushed limestone to the trail; Develop a rest area near Gotham

Port Andrew Boat Landing: Provide two new picnic tables;

Proposed Richland County ATV Trails: Maps

Richland County Snowmobile Trails: Bridge repairs and maintenance

Rifle Range: New signs at the Range/ Replace target holders at all distances; update pit toilet to ADA standards.

Viola Park: Replace 6 picnic tables; Repair foundation at shelter; Update pit toilets to ADA standards; Install a new well; Add camp sites

Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Schedule

This section is designed to serve as a guide over the next five years to assist Richland County in charting the course of future park and recreation facility development. The Capital Improvements Schedule (CIS) for the county parks is included in Appendix A. It was prepared by the Richland County Parks Commission. The CIS not only priorities each facility as to which year during the five year period the improvement will take place, it also provides an estimate of what the cost will be for each improvement in 2015 dollars. The CIS includes those facility improvements that will be made at each park to implement the handicap accessibility requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

It is important to realize that the CIS is only a summary of estimated costs based on current year figures. Project costs will be examined more closely when particular improvement plans are being

developed. Changes will be made that reflect changing use trends, citizen interests, the economy and county budget considerations. Before capital improvement projects are undertaken, the Parks Commission members with citizen input will: analyze all proposed projects and determine priorities each year, determine cost estimates for each development project, determine project budgetary limitations and potential funding sources.

The Richland County Parks Commission is hopeful that a number of the recommended improvements to the county parks can be carried out with financial assistance from Department of Natural Resources Stewardship Funds and/or other Federal Park Development funds. At the same time, however, the county recognized that a considerable investment will also be required at the county level if the recommendations discussed in this plan are ever going to be carried out. The CIS provides a good indication of what level of assistance is going to be required to be carried out. The CIS provides a good indication of what level of assistance is going to be required during any particular year in the planning period.

Maintenance and Operations Schedule

The county recognize the value of having a maintenance and operations schedule for the county park system. Such a schedule not only evaluated the on-going maintenance responsibilities at the parks, it also considers the implications of the Capital Improvement Schedule (CIS) on the county's future operation and maintenance capabilities. All work required in the park is listed each year, by season. An attempt is also made to break the list down to individual work items and, below each work item, list the tasks required to complete the work item. The Operations and Maintenance Schedule for Richland County is included in Appendix B.