



Photo: Greg Sanderson

Social benefits

Participation in many nature-based outdoor activities is often a group activity. Families and friends tend to camp, bicycle, ride ATVs and UTVs, horseback ride, bird watch and hike in groups (Table 9 - pg. 34 where 55% of people stated that they participated in outdoor recreation to "be with family and friends").

The bonds that form through the collective outdoor experiences shared by groups in many ways are the "social glue" that bring people together. And the stories that accompany particularly memorable outings – whether because of a rare bird sighting, attempting an activity for the first time, reeling in a trophy fish, getting lost in the woods, or the inevitable mishaps that leave people laughing – often become family legends that are retold over and over.

Outdoor recreation can also be an opportunity for people to meet and better understand each other's perspectives, needs, and motivations. Like sports, the arts, religion, social clubs and school, outdoor recreation can bring together diverse groups of people interested in a common pursuit and provide a forum to interact, learn new customs, and better understand each other. This in turn can strengthen community cohesion and connections to natural resources.

Recent research has indicated a connection between greenspace and the amount of time people spend in nature with reduced crime and how people view their surroundings.⁴⁰ This is particularly true in urban settings. In Wisconsin, local park programs are increasingly customizing new outdoor recreation facilities to reflect the heritage and current ethnic diversity of the surrounding community. These city parks can serve two purposes – one as an outdoor recreation facility and also as a source of cultural education.

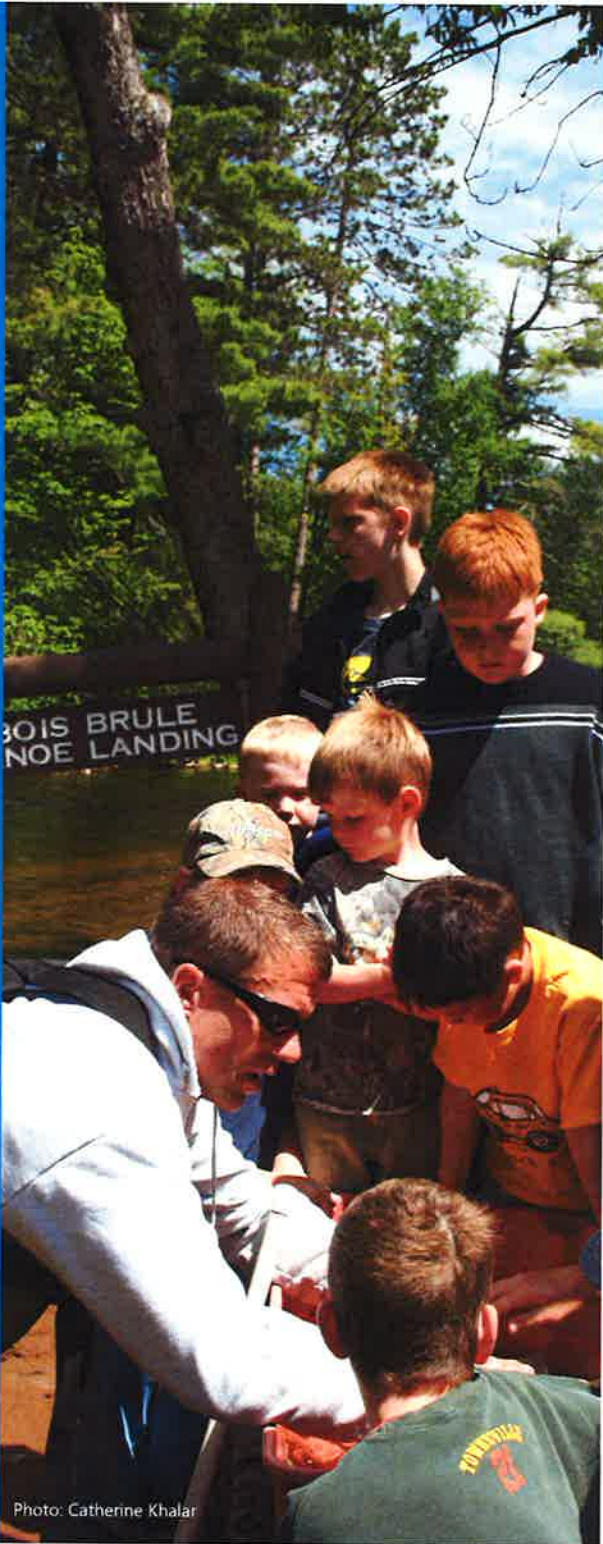
The link between physical activity and academic achievement in a range of school-age children has been the topic of ongoing research. Several studies have shown a positive connection between children's participation in physical pursuits, including nature-based outdoor activities, and improved educational outcomes.⁴¹

Outdoor recreation groups

Wisconsin has numerous clubs and associations representing hunters, bicyclists, snowmobilers, horseback riders, ATV and UTV riders, birdwatchers, and many other participants.

These groups have long been exceptionally key players in organizing events, volunteer work days, educational and outreach programs, and in advocating for policies and funding to support outdoor recreation.

Participation in these groups is on the rise. For example, the number of snowmobile clubs has grown from 575 to 615 over the last ten years.



GAPS AND NEEDS IN OUR EXISTING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

In developing the following statewide needs and gaps in our recreation opportunities, the department incorporated information from:

- The SCORP recreation participation survey question regarding needed recreation opportunities in residents' home county (Appendix 6).
- Recreation Opportunities Analysis, which identified recreation needs for each of the eight regions of the state (Appendix 8).
- The SCORP survey of county park directors, which asked about needs at the county level (Appendix 4).
- The SCORP Advisory Team and department staff.

Statewide Recreation Needs:

Places near population centers

Because of the inverse distribution of our population and public lands as well as the limited amount of time people have to participate, there is a very large need to provide more places for people to participate in outdoor recreation near where they live. In particular is the need to provide opportunities for residents to visit places after work or for a couple of hours on a weekend. Places that provide opportunities for hiking, all types of bicycle riding, dog walking, picnicking, and different water-related activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking are likely to be heavily used.



Trails

By nearly every measure, the largest need throughout the state is for more trails that enable people to experience natural settings, visit the vibrant downtowns of our cities and villages, commute to work, and access favorite sites. All types of trails are in demand – hiking, bicycling (recreational, mountain biking, and fat-tire), horseback riding, ATV/UTV and motorcycle riding, and 4WD vehicle trails.

Water access – shoreline and boat launches

Lakes, streams and rivers are a defining feature of Wisconsin. From the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, from the thousands of inland lakes and the tens of thousands of miles of flowing water, residents and visitors have been drawn to the water's edge to fish, hunt, launch any manner of watercraft, bird watch and beach walk. Access to water remains a universal need throughout the state; what varies are the activities pursued when on or near the water.

Camping Opportunities

With a large cohort of retirees travelling in RVs combined with an adventurous younger generation, demand for camping has grown in recent years and is likely to remain popular for years to come. Given the divergence in desired experiences – some campers wanting access to hot showers and WiFi while others wanting neither – recreation providers will need to collaborate and coordinate on providing the camping experiences best suited to different public lands.

Regional Recreation Needs (high needs identified in the Recreation Opportunities Analysis – see Appendix 8)

Great Northwest Region

ATV/UTV riding
 Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Fishing
 Four-wheel vehicle driving
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Hunting - big game
 Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
 Off-highway motorcycle riding
 Swimming in lakes and rivers

Western Sands Region

Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Cross country skiing
 Dog walking
 Fishing
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Horseback riding
 Hunting - big game
 Picnicking
 Snowshoeing
 Swimming in lakes and rivers

Mississippi River Corridor

Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Cross country skiing
 Dog walking
 Fishing
 Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Hunting - big game
 Nature photography
 Participating in nature-based education programs
 Picnicking
 Snowshoeing
 Visiting a beach, beach walking

Northwoods Region

ATV/UTV riding
 Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Fishing
 Four-wheel vehicle driving
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Hunting - big game
 Off-highway motorcycle riding
 Participating in nature-based education programs
 Snowmobiling



Southern Gateways Region

ATV/UTV riding
 Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Fishing
 Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
 Picnicking
 Snowshoeing
 Swimming in lakes and rivers

Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Region

Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Fishing - all types
 Hiking, walking, trail running or backpacking
 Horseback riding
 Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
 Visiting a beach, beach walking

Lake Winnebago Waters Region

Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - developed and primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Cross country skiing
 Dog walking
 Fishing
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Hunting - big game
 Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
 Nature photography
 Participating in nature-based education programs
 Picnicking
 Swimming in lakes and rivers
 Visiting a beach, beach walking

Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region

Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
 Bird or wildlife watching
 Camping - primitive
 Canoeing or kayaking
 Cross country skiing
 Fishing
 Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
 Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
 Motorboating (waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
 Nature photography
 Picnicking
 Snowshoeing
 Swimming in lakes and rivers

ENHANCE FUNDING AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

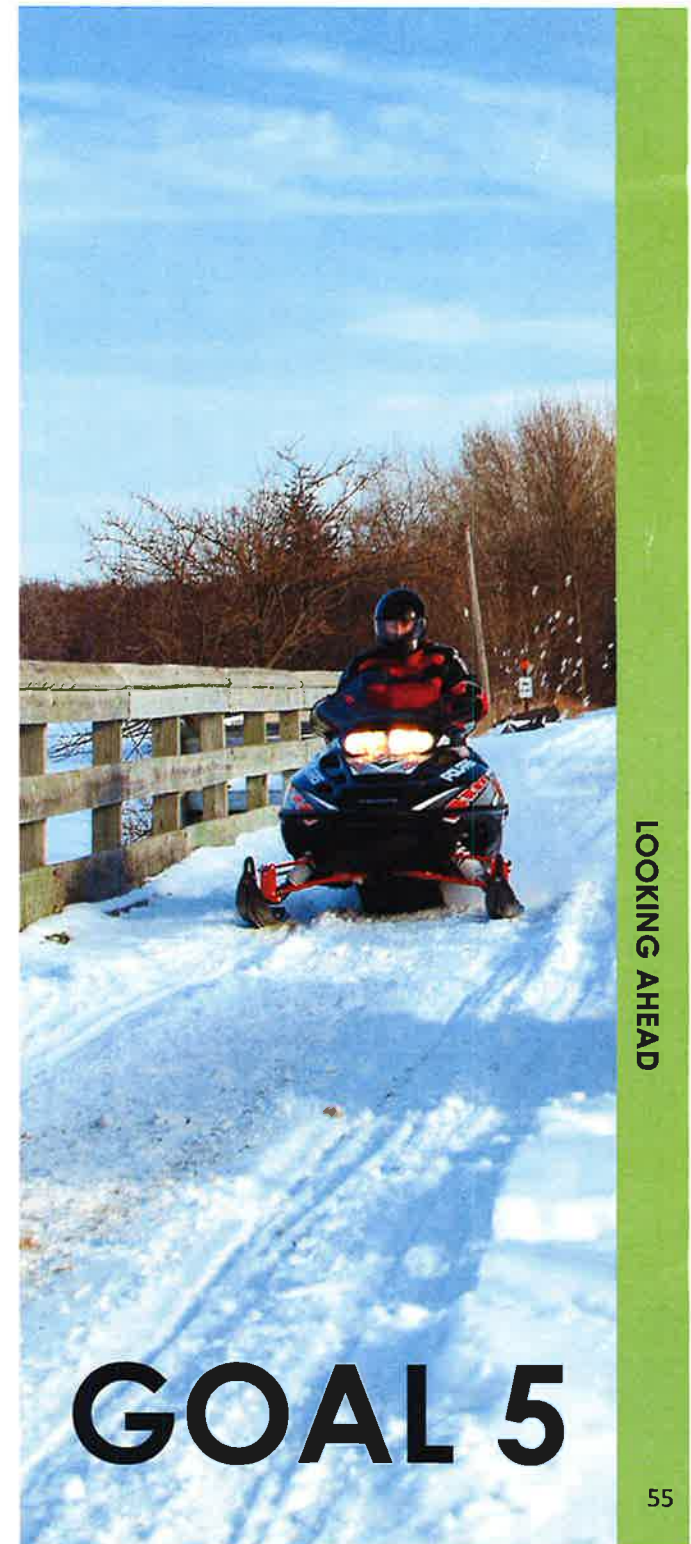
Broaden and strengthen the funding sources for developing and managing outdoor recreation facilities and lands.

Objectives

- Provide a robust, long-term, and stable funding framework for outdoor recreation facilities and lands in Wisconsin.
- Identify ways for all participants in outdoor recreation to contribute equitably to the development and management of recreation opportunities.

Desired Actions

- Facilitate collaboration among federal, state, and local governments and other partners to fully utilize available LWCF and state funding to maintain, develop, and enhance outdoor recreation facilities.
- Develop and distribute materials that describe the economic, health and social values of outdoor recreation.
- Continue building and encouraging public property friends groups.
- Survey outdoor recreation participants to identify their support for different options to fund the development and operation of recreation facilities.
- Explore opportunities for public land management agencies to cooperatively develop creative funding solutions and efficiencies to meet recreation needs.



GOAL 5