

Parks and Forest

The Parks & Forest Department manages the timber sales, county forest roads, wildlife habitat improvement projects, and other operations on the county forest (52,712 acres), three county owned dams (Coon Fork, Lake Altoona, Lake Eau Claire), seven parks (Big Falls, Coon Fork, Harstad, L.L. Phillips, Lake Altoona, Lake Eau Claire, and Lowes Creek); three campgrounds (Coon Fork, Harstad, and Expo Center); Tower Ridge Recreation Area; Exposition Center, four cross-country ski trails, state funded countywide snowmobile trails, state funded ATV/UTV trails, hiking, mountain biking, horseback, disc golf, and hunter access trails; boat and canoe landings on three lakes and the Eau Claire River; and oversight of thirteen floodplain properties acquired by the federal Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program on the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers.

2021 Accomplishments

County Forest

- Adopted 2021-2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan
- Finished forest road rehabilitation and graveling on Highline Landing Forest Road
- Straightening of Channey Forest Road and graveling project completed
- Control burn conducted on Black Creek Forest Road oak site
- 80 acres of oak scarified, ensuring forest regeneration back to oak species
- Successful SFI and FSC dual audit of county forest management program
- Trail and road building assistance for Lost Lake stabilization project with Lake Eau Claire District
- Continued work on Ruffed Grouse Society project off Stoney Lonesome Road
- Replacement and reconstruction of new culverts on all forest roads.

Parks

- New toddler playground and sidewalk installed at Lake Altoona Park
- Collaboration with Treasurer's office on receipting of daily and seasonal park pass deposits
- Fiber optic line installed to Coon Fork Park
- Mobility beach wheelchairs added for public use at Lake Altoona and Coon Fork Parks
- Concrete pad installation for payment kiosks to be installed in 2022
- Removal of hazardous trees throughout the park system
- Began installing all abilities access dock at Lake Eau Claire, project to be completed in spring 2022
- Tore down hazardous Harstad Park shelter, site prep for new shelter conducted
- Septic system replacement of beach restroom at Lake Altoona Park
- Began updating the comprehensive outdoor recreation plan

Expo Center

- Replacement of HVAC system on Exhibit building
- Exterior barn lights replaced with LED fixtures.
- Installation of new carded entrance system to Exhibit building
- Event numbers started to come back to near pre-pandemic levels
- Eau Claire County Junior fair was held with modifications.

ATV/Snowmobile Trails

- No new trail or bridge rehabilitation projects completed
- Closure of Troubled Waters Bridge for repairs to be completed in 2022
- ATV trail boom mowing completed.

Alignment with Strategic Plan

Stabilize County Finances and Operations	Enhance Communities and the Quality and Equity of Citizens' Lives	Improve Collaboration
Parks and Forest operations are self-sustaining. No levy funds required for 8 years in a row.	Provided safe and clean county parks and recreation areas during a time of national pandemic. Outdoor recreational usage was at all-time highs in 2021.	Collaboration with Treasurer's office on receipting of daily and seasonal park passes. Has created a clear separation of duties and improved flow and delivery to our customers
Investment in additional solar panels through Eau Claire Energy Cooperative. Reducing monthly utility costs at Lake Eau Claire and using green energy.	Applied forest management ensures a renewable supply of forest products, while managing for future generations.	Partnered with Highway Department on site improvement work at Lake Eau Claire North boat landing project and other smaller projects throughout the year.

2021 Future Opportunities

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to adjust the way we work and planned in 2021. Major budget reductions were put in place for the 2021 budget due to the pandemic and this resulted in a year of lesser seasonal staff than normal and also many less park projects taking place. The 2022 budget cycle offers some relief to staffing levels and project work, with more staff being brought on in the summer months and a return to pre-pandemic levels with park project work.

The implementation of a new outdoor recreation plan will help formulate a short-term plan for park improvement projects in the next five years. Many other exciting park capital projects are scheduled for 2022 including: new office building at Coon Fork, beach parking lot improvements at Lake Altoona, new parking lot and restrooms at Big Falls, new park pavilion and playground at Harstad Park, paving projects and installation of an RV dump station at the Expo Center, new park shelter at LL Phillips Park and installation of credit card payment kiosks at 3 of our park. This year will be one of the most exciting park development years in recent history. With almost every one of our main parks having a major capital project going on.

In addition, we will also be working on a county-wide parks master plan. This will help frame our next 20 years of park development projects and priorities within our park system. This long-term vision will help create a more cohesive update to our parks.

Forest management continues to be a tremendous asset to our department. Timber sales have stabilized, and markets continue to be strong with sawlog heavy sales, while the pulp market continues to fluctuate, and prices have remained low. The continued closure of the Verso mill in Wisconsin Rapids has continued to keep pulp prices lower than pre-pandemic.

Our motorized trails projects will be busy as well in 2022 with 2 new snowmobile trail bridges scheduled for installation. And repair work of the Troubled Waters ATV/snowmobile bridge scheduled to be completed in 2022.

#1 County Forest/Forest Road Aids/Wildlife Management/State Aid Forest Roads	Budget	Levy	FTE's
	\$378,585	\$0	3.93
To provide county owned natural resources for public use including timber management, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities, and to manage under the County Forest 15 Year Management Plan and in accordance with Chapter 28.11 Wisconsin Statutes.			

OUTPUTS					
			<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Sales Established:			18	22	18
Timer Revenue Received:			\$889,975	\$1,041,183	\$632,289
Acres of Wildlife Openings Maintained:			38	38	38
Miles of Forest Road Passing Annual State Standards:			17.94	17.94	17.94
Acres of Newly Established Reproduction for Various Species (through oak scarification):			25	67	80
Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2019	2020	2021
Meet annual allowable cut goals established by DNR standards	Goals will be met annually for establishment.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Compliance checks on active timber sales	100% of all timber sales will have contract compliance checks annually.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Utilization of available grant funding for wildlife habitat projects	Wildlife projects will utilize 100% grant funds available annually.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Complete wildlife projects within grant time allotments	100% of projects will be completed within time allotments.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Utilize state aid for forest road maintenance and maintain roads within state	100% of all county forest roads will pass state inspection.	100%	100%	100%	100%
#2 County Parks & Recreation Areas		Budget \$795,195	Levy \$0		FTE's 4.91
To provide, develop, and maintain high quality park and recreation facilities to meet public recreation demand.					
OUTPUTS					
			<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Total camp reservation – Coon Fork:			1315	2142	2672
Total camping nights - regular season:			5599	6369	6751
Total off-season camping nights:			315	326	736
Camping revenue - Coon Fork:			\$95,808	\$123,762	\$139,627
Camping revenue – Harstad:			\$5,668	\$8,469	\$14,266
Reservation Totals for Shelter\Clubhouse:					
Lake Altoona Clubhouse/Shelter:			41/31	2/1	40/29
Lake Eau Claire Clubhouse/Shelter:			37/13	1/0	24/20
Coon Fork Picnic Shelter:			5	2	3
Harstad Park Picnic Shelter:			7	0	5
Tower Ridge Chalet:			15	6	19
Lowes Creek Picnic Shelter:			2	1	8
Total Net Revenue for Reservations:			\$21,290	\$9,504	\$21,363
Total Net Equipment Rental Revenue:			\$6,614	\$0	\$3,799
Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2019	2020	2021

Public satisfaction in use of park and recreation facilities	95% of customers will report being satisfied with park visit on surveys.	95%	100%	100%	100%
Continued level of public use	1. All campsites will be utilized on weekends.	64%	78%	89%	77%
	2. Maintain number of shelter/clubhouse/chalets reservations.	100%	85%	9%	1138%
Compliance of vendor contracts	100% of contractual services will meet contract specifications (garbage, septic, ice).	100%	100%	100%	100%

#3 Exposition Center		Budget \$85,234	Levy \$0		FTE's 0
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The Exposition Center is a multi-purpose 28-acre site for public and private use that enhances local recreational, educational, and commercial endeavors. The Exposition Center is one of the only sites in the area that can host large events. It is a cost competitive site for the benefit of businesses, constituent user groups and citizens throughout the region.

OUTPUTS

		<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	
Revenue generated for buildings/grounds/equipment rentals:		\$34,076	\$7,324	\$28,455	
Revenue generated for winter storage:		\$19,558	\$21,735	\$20,920	
Community attendance at Expo Center paid events (estimated):		22,000	2,000	25,371	
Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2019	2020	2021
Maximize occupancy of rental space in the barns for winter storage vehicles (Oct – April).	Amount of space filled at the end of the winter storage let-in date.	95%	100%	100%	100%
Maximize rental occupancy of the Expo Center during the rental season (April – Oct).	Number of weekday rentals.	64%	78%	4%	36%
	Number of weekend day rentals.	100%	85%	11%	58%

#4 State Funded Snowmobile & ATV/UTV Trails	Budget \$77,172	Levy \$0		FTE's 0.35
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Provide and maintain high quality state-funded snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails on county and private land.

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2019	2020	2021
Apply for both Snowmobile and ATV/UTV program to DNR (by April 15 deadline).	100% of applications will be submitted by deadline.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Submit expenses annually for grant claim by December 31.	100% of claims will be in to DNR by deadline.	100%	100%	100%	100%
All trails to meet state standards and pass inspections.	100% of trail mileage will be maintained within state standards.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Totals		Budget	Levy		FTE's

	\$1,336,186	\$0		9.19
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