

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.

2022 Accomplishments

County Forest

- Carbon credits project approved by county board
- Gravel projects completed Big Falls South and Black Creek Forest roads
- Purchased new forest road grader for department
- 15 acres of site preparation for red pine planting (no oak scarification due to lack of acorns)
- Steel timber bridge structures purchased by department through sustainable forestry grant
- Continued work on Ruffed Grouse Society project off Stoney Lonesome Road
- Replacement and reconstruction of new culverts on several forest roads

Parks

- New office building constructed at Coon Fork Park
- New pavilion constructed at Harstad Park
- New pavilion constructed at LL Phillips Park
- New vault toilet buildings installed at Big Falls Park
- Paving of Big Falls North parking lot
- Installation of new playground at Harstad Park
- Installation of 4 park credit card payment kiosks
- Replacement of parks field office heating and cooling system
- Installation of boat transfer dock at Lake Eau Claire north landing
- New roof on Coon Fork dayside shelter
- Completion of comprehensive outdoor recreation plan
- Master Park planning began for all county parks
- Lake Eau Claire clubhouse study completed
- Installation of new dam monitoring hardware and technology at Lake Altoona and Lake Eau Claire dams
- New trail signage installed on all Coon Fork Park trails
- New park entrance signs at Big Falls Park and Lake Eau Claire maintenance facility
- Removal of hazardous trees throughout the park system

Expo Center

- Purchased additional solar credits from ECEC to lower utility costs in future years
- New LED lights installed on parking lot.
- New outside LED lights installed on building E
- Event numbers returned to pre-pandemic levels

ATV/Snowmobile Trails

- Rehabilitation of Troubled Waters ATV/Snowmobile bridge
- Installation of new culverts on county forest ATV trails
- New snowmobile bridge over Otter Creek in Foster
- New snowmobile bridge over Beaver Creek in Brackett

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 9 years in a row.	Provided safe and clean county parks and recreation areas during a time of national pandemic. Outdoor recreational usage continued to be as busy as ever.	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 Expo Center and using green energy.	Applied forest management ensures a renewable supply of forest products, while managing for future generations.	Partnered with Highway Department on equipment sharing and small concrete projects for kiosks and vault toilets.

2023 Future Opportunities

Continued support of the parks and forest capital improvement plan will result in several new and updated facilities in 2023. Highlights of the year will consist of beach parking lot improvements at Lake Altoona, trail reconstruction and paving at Big Falls, installation of yurts and garage building at Coon Fork, continued pit toilet replacements throughout the park system, three new park payment kiosks, open air pavilion renovations at Lake Eau Claire, and much needed door replacements at the Expo Center. Yet again, almost all of our parks and facilities will have some sort of capital improvement project going on this year.

Coupled with the recent county-wide parks master plans that began work in 2022, the framework for our future park improvements will have a solid foundation for planning and implementation efforts in future years. Many of these projects will be highlighted during the budgeting process. A recently donated parcel on the Chippewa River looks likely to be added to the departments land holdings and future planning of management will be critical in ensuring this property is utilized to its fullest potential.

Seasonal staffing levels will be returned fully to pre-pandemic levels and operations will again be fully staffed moving forward. A newly created Parks and Programs Manager position has been filled and will be a huge help in gaining efficiencies on parks management and operations moving into the future.

Our timber sale program continues to provide stable and consistent revenue to our department. Timber sale prices have been stable and we have continued to market and sell attractive timber sales to our loggers. A large planting project has been planned for this year and will help assure that future generations will have desirable timber sales in the future. The implementation of a carbon credit project will begin in 2023 and will result in large revenue windfalls in the future. With several large tracts of forest land available for sale, it is hoped that these revenues combined with grant opportunities can help possibly secure additions to the County Forest in future years. It is anticipated that discussions may take place on negotiations during the next few years.

#1 County Forest/Forest Road Aids/Wildlife Management/State Aid Forest Roads		Budget	Levy	FTE's	
		\$488,482	\$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					
			2020	2021	2022
Sales Established:			22	18	17
Timer Revenue Received:			\$1,041,183	\$801,601	\$1,043,217
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):			67	80	0
Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2020	2021	2022
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	Levy	FTE's	
		\$955,845	\$0	4.91	
To provide, develop, and maintain high quality park and recreation facilities to meet public recreation demand.					
OUTPUTS					
			2020	2021	2022
Total camp reservation – Coon Fork:			2142	2672	2159
Total camping nights - regular season:			6369	6751	6291
Total off-season camping nights:			326	736	578
Camping revenue - Coon Fork:			\$123,762	\$139,445	\$137,344
Camping revenue – Harstad:			\$8,469	\$14,266	\$8,516
Reservation Totals for Shelter\Clubhouse:					
Lake Altoona Clubhouse/Shelter:			2/1	40/29	46/29
Lake Eau Claire Clubhouse/Shelter:			1/0	24/20	26/19
Coon Fork Picnic Shelter:			2	3	8
Harstad Park Picnic Shelter:			0	5	0
Tower Ridge Chalet:			6	19	14

Lowes Creek Picnic Shelter:		1	8	3
Total Net Revenue for Reservations:		\$9,504	\$21,363	\$22,125
Total Net Equipment Rental Revenue:		\$0	\$3,799	\$3,605

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2020	2022	2022
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%	89%	77%	78%
	2. Maintain number of shelter/clubhouse/chalets reservations.	100%	9%	1138%	98%
Compliance of vendor contracts	100% of contractual services will meet contract specifications (garbage, septic, ice).	100%	100%	100%	100%

#3 Exposition Center	Budget \$98,142	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

	2020	2021	2022
Revenue generated for buildings/grounds/equipment rentals:	\$7,324	\$28,455	\$40,357
Revenue generated for winter storage:	\$21,735	\$19,690	\$24,070
Community attendance at Expo Center paid events (estimated):	2,000	25,371	22,485

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2020	2021	2022
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%	4%	36%	22%
	Number of weekend day rentals.	100%	11%	58%	55%

#4 State Funded Snowmobile & ATV/UTV Trails	Budget \$380,675	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	2020	2021	2022
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 \$1,923,370	Levy \$0		FTE's 9.19