

# 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; Red Flint 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.

## 2023 Accomplishments

### County Forest

- Carbon credits project inventory work completed
- Continued work on forest access plan
- 137 acres of oak scarification
- 400' of bridge railing installed on Black Creek Forest Road
- Mowing of all forest roads and hunter game trails
- Refurbished five existing gates on county forest access trails
- Replacement and reconstruction of new culverts on several forest roads

### Parks

- New garage building constructed at Coon Fork Park
- Creation of new full time Parks and Programs Manager Position
- Completed donation of new county recreation area – Red Flint Recreation Area
- Lake Altoona beach parking lot construction
- New vault toilet building installed at LL Phillips Park
- Repaving of all trails at Big Falls
- Parking lot expansion and new asphalt at Big Falls North
- New vault toilet buildings installed at Coon Fork dayside
- Phase 1 completion of Lake Eau Claire Clubhouse project
- New vault toilet building and ADA walkway installed at Skid Row boat landing on Lake Eau Claire
- Lake Eau Claire north boat launch redone and extended further into lake
- New ADA walk through gates installed at Big Falls North and LL Phillips
- Installation of 3 park credit card payment kiosks
- .40 FTE recreational deputy shared with Sheriff's and Highway Departments
- Installation of 2 rain gardens at Harstad Park
- All park buildings rekeyed to a 1 key master system
- Connector trail from installed from Coon Fork dayside to campground
- Implementation of campground store, with strong sales on most items for camper convenience
- Creation of floating park attendant model in summer to increase coverage throughout park system
- Standardized cleaning product usage within park system, resulting in a 30% reduction on supplies

### Expo Center

- Purchased additional solar credits from ECEC to lower utility costs in future years
- Revenues exceeded expenditures for first year ever

### ATV/Snowmobile Trails

- Installation of new culverts on county forest ATV trails
- Mowing of all ATV trails
- Additional gravel applied on Hamilton Falls river trail

## 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 10 years in a row. In addition, the Expo Center's revenues exceeded expenses for first year ever.	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 receipt 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.

## 2024 Future Opportunities

The department has another busy year that includes continued updates to many of our county park and recreation areas. Key new projects this year will consist of new playground installation and front entrance paving at Coon Fork campground, electrical service installation at Harstad campground, and continued pit toilet replacements throughout the park system. The department will also be applying for several large grants to help complete other projects including further work on the Lake Altoona Park master plan phasing, rehabilitation of the south boat landing on Lake Eau Claire, and installation of automation systems on Lake Altoona and Lake Eau Claire. Several other key pieces of our fleet will also be updated including a new parks mower, a finish mower for Toolcat, a new half ton truck, and new ski trail grooming equipment. Yet again, almost all our parks and facilities will have some sort of capital improvement project going on this year.

Staff will continue to plan and develop projects that have been identified in our outdoor recreation plan and our recently implemented Strategic Implementation plan. We also have a few carry over projects from 2023 that will be completed this year, with glamping structures being developed at Coon Fork, new doors at the Expo Center, and completion of phase 2 of the Lake Eau Claire clubhouse renovations.

Our newly donated recreation property, the Red Flint Recreation Area, will also be focused on for future developments. Initial plans will include installation of signage, hiking trail development, and discussion with DNR on an easement to create a parking area.

On the forestry side of things, our timber sale program continues to provide stable and consistent revenue to our department. Timber sale prices continue to be stable, and we have continued to market and sell attractive timber sales to our loggers. Continued progress on our carbon credit project is anticipated this year, with the inventory and verification process being completed. This will bring our project closer to issuance of credits, with potential for credit sales in early 2025. The revenue from these sales will be further evaluated for allocations, with several large tracts of land coming for sale within the county forest boundary. These parcels would be good candidates for acquisition when they become available.

<b>#1 County Forest/Forest Road Aids/Wildlife Management/State Aid Forest Roads</b>		Budget \$508,106	Levy (\$623,398)	FTE's 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.					
<b>OUTPUTS</b>					
			<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Sales Established:			18	17	14
Timer Revenue Received:			\$801,601	\$1,043,217	\$899,193
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):			80	0	137
Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2021	2022	2023
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%
<b>#2 County Parks &amp; Recreation Areas</b>		Budget \$1,062,063	Levy \$471,049	FTE's 4.91	
To provide, develop, and maintain high quality park and recreation facilities to meet public recreation demand.					
<b>OUTPUTS</b>					
			<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
Total camp reservation – Coon Fork:			2672	2159	2098
Total camping nights - regular season:			6751	6291	6448
Total off-season camping nights:			736	578	456
Camping revenue - Coon Fork:			\$139,445	\$137,344	\$157,542
Camping revenue – Harstad:			\$14,266	\$8,516	\$6,914
Reservation Totals for Shelter\Clubhouse:			140	141	116
Lake Altoona Clubhouse/Shelter:			40/29	46/29	48/26
Lake Eau Claire Clubhouse/Shelter:			24/20	26/19	0/12
Coon Fork Picnic Shelter:			3	8	3
Harstad Park Picnic Shelter:			5	0	10
Tower Ridge Chalet:			19	14	14

Lowes Creek Picnic Shelter:		8	3	3
<b>Total Net Revenue for Reservations:</b>		\$21,363	\$22,125	\$13,082
<b>Total Net Equipment Rental Revenue:</b>		\$3,799	\$3,605	\$3,793

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2021	2022	2023
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%	77%	78%	80%
	2. Maintain number of shelter/clubhouse/chalets reservations.	100%	1138%	98%	98%
Compliance of vendor contracts	100% of contractual services will meet contract specifications (garbage, septic, ice).	100%	100%	100%	100%

<b>#3 Exposition Center</b>		Budget \$121,453	Levy \$6,293		FTE's 0
-----------------------------	--	---------------------	-----------------	--	------------

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**

	2021	2022	2023
Revenue generated for buildings/grounds/equipment rentals:	\$28,455	\$40,357	\$68,075
Revenue generated for winter storage:	\$19,690	\$24,070	\$27,429
Community attendance at Expo Center paid events (estimated):	25,371	22,485	26,252

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2021	2022	2023
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%	36%	22%	36%
	Number of weekend day rentals.	100%	58%	55%	63%

<b>#4 State Funded Snowmobile &amp; ATV/UTV Trails</b>	Budget \$78,674	Levy \$1,353		FTE's 0.35
--	--------------------	-----------------	--	---------------

Provide and maintain high quality state-funded snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails on county and private land.

Performance Goal	Outcome Measures	Benchmark	2021	2022	2023
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%
<b>Totals</b>		Budget \$1,770,296	Levy (\$144,703)		FTE's 10.19