

DNR Consultation Report
Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council meeting
March 18, 2026
DNR Consultation Report December – March 2026

Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) Program Updates

General Program Updates

- The Park and Recreation Management (PRM) program continues FTE and seasonal/LTE hiring this spring. The program will continue FTE hiring as long as resources are available. The program must maintain a 5% vacancy rate which equates to about 13 positions – the program is close to that number. Seasonal hiring is going well in most places with some properties continuing to see record number of applications.
- The PRM program is working on the 2027-2029 budget. This includes submitting various budget papers to agency leadership for the program operating budget and submission of the biennial capital development budget. The budget will work through various program, division and agency approvals before being presented to the Natural Resources Board in late summer/early fall.
- Property visitation for 2025 was 20,838,733, which is a 2% increase over 2024 and a 6.4% decrease from 2020. YTD 2026 data is not yet available.
- Marketing and advertising for spring will focus on admission and trail pass sales.
- Social media and newsletter content will focus on pass sales, hidden gems, spring events, property and staff highlights.
- Staff is currently in the process of updating Memorandum of Agreements with several cooperative trail partners across the state. This will continue for the next several years until all of the agreements have been updated. The program is starting with agreements that have a requirement to change due outdated language or responsibilities and where agreements may not currently exist.
- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced the approval of Stewardship funding for Friends Grants to 29 nonprofit organizations for improvements at DNR-managed properties across the state. The State Building Commission approved the funding for 32 projects totaling \$499,144 in Stewardship grant dollars, leveraging \$572,061 in matching contributions and \$3 million in total project costs. Bike related projects include a grant to the Friends of Military Ridge State Trail for wayfinding signage and to the Friends of Red Cedar State Trail for trailhead depot visitor center safety upgrades. Learn more at:
 - [Gov. Evers Announces State Building Commission Approves Approximately \\$205.7 Million in Projects Across Wisconsin](#)
 - [Stewardship Friends Grants Approved For 32 DNR Improvement Projects](#)

Bike Trail Project Updates

DNR Trail Projects

- **Badger State Trail Stewart Tunnel** – Project is proceeding with repairs consistent with the scope of work described as Alternative 4 – Corrugated Metal Pipe Lining in the Stewart Tunnel Alternatives Analysis Report. Construction is anticipated to start in April with late 2026/early 2027 completion.
- **Military Ridge State Trail**
 - MMSD Sanitary Sewer Project – DNR property and real estate staff are working through several agreements/easements for the MMSD sanitary sewer project that will impact the Military Ridge State Trail, the section west of Fitchrona Road that parallels USH 18/151.

Construction is anticipated to start in 2026. No trail closures are expected at this time but that may change as the project progresses.

- Mount Horeb Trailhead – 2026 construction anticipated for roof replacement and interior upgrades for restroom facility.
- **Glacial Drumlin State Trail West** – Resurfacing will start this summer on the section from Deerfield to London. London to Lake Mills is anticipated to be done in 2027.
- **Elroy-Sparta State Trail** - A large infrastructure project kicked off construction in February on the Elroy-Sparta State Trail. The project involves the repair or replacement of 10 bridge or culvert structures on the Elroy-Sparta State Trail. The project begins with work on five structures between John Street in Sparta and the southeast-most crossing of Javelin Road in the Town of Wells. Work on this section is expected to continue at least through the first week of May 2026. The project will then shift to the other structures located near Norwalk and Wilton this fall. To facilitate this work, the trail will need to be closed to public use around the construction. Currently, the trail is only closed between the two Javelin Road crossings in the Town of Wells. View [a map](#) detailing the closed portion.
- **Willow River State Park** - Mountain bike trailhead parking lot construction was completed late last summer. Constructed two gravel parking lots to serve the new mountain bike trails on the north side of the park.

Partnership Trail Projects

- **City of Verona Military Ridge State Trail Segment** - City of Verona is moving forward with the replacement of 3 bridges for the 2-mile segment from Old Highway PB to Verona Area High School. After the bridges are replaced, the City will be paving this section. Construction for the bridge replacements is anticipated to start in May 2026 with late fall completion date. There will be three detours around the bridges while they are under construction. The City of Verona is hosting a public meeting on March 18 to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the project.
- **Dane County Walking Iron Trailhead** - DNR conveyed an easement and land use agreement to Dane County to allow them to improve an existing parking lot and construct a second lot at the Hwy 78 parking lot for the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway property that will serve as a trailhead for the County's Walking Iron Trail and provide additional public access for the riverway property. Dane County anticipates that construction for the 3-mile Walking Iron Trail (Phase 2) will start in spring/summer 2026 and be completed in 2027. The Walking Iron Trail will connect from the Hwy 78 parking lot to the Wisconsin River bridge crossing to the Great Sauk State Trail in Sauk County.
- **City of Platteville Mound View State Trail**
 - Sealcoating and native tree and shrub plantings – 2026 construction
 - New paved trail connection in Platteville to the City's Mound View Park
 - Streambank stabilization project along section of trail in Platteville
- **Rib Mountain State Park** – In partnership with the Kocourek Foundation, trail design for the 2026 build is being finalized for bike-optimized single trail mountain bike trails in the northwest part of the park. Construction is anticipated to start in spring/summer of 2026. A field trip is planned for 4/24 as part of the Healthy Communities Summit that will be held in Wausau this year. The overall trail project has three goals:
 - Reroute existing hiking trails to prevent erosion and make them more sustainable.
 - Build bike-optimized single track trails and a shared use trail to bring a mountain biking to a venue close to Wausau.

- Create a wider crushed gravel multi-use community perimeter path around Rib Mountain.

Master Planning Updates

- [North Central Forest Proposed Regional Master Plan and Environmental Analysis](#) (20 northern counties) will be available soon. State Trails covered by this plan include the Ahnapee, Fox River, Friendship, and Newton Blackmour state trails. When public comment is sought on the proposed plan, the comments will be submitted to the Natural Resources Board and will follow their procedures. See the NRB website for more information - <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/about/NRB/public.html>
- [Western Coulees and Ridges Draft Regional Master Plan](#) is moving towards public reviews in mid-2026. State Trails covered by this plan include the 400, Buffalo River, Chippewa River, Elroy-Sparta, Great River, La Crosse River, and Red Cedar state trails.
- The [Central Sand Hills](#) planning team is working through plan development. A draft plan may be available for the public later this year.
- The [Southern Lake Michigan Coastal](#) planning team is working through plan development. A draft plan may be available in early 2027.
- The [Central Lake Michigan Coastal](#) planning team is working through plan development. A draft plan likely won't be ready before 2028.
- The Joint Agency Team (Wisconsin DNR, the United States Forest Service and Lac Courte Oreilles) are working through plan development to update the 2000 [Chippewa Flowage Joint Agency Master Plan](#). A draft plan may be available in 2027.
- Early stages of pre-planning are underway for the [Forest Transition](#), [Southeast Glacial Plains](#) and [Northern Highland](#) regions. Scoping public involvement opportunities for all may occur in 2027. Websites are available and interested parties should sign up for updates by clicking on the link next to the red envelope on each individual region's page.
- A general index of DNR master planning is at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fl/PropertyPlanning/index>, including information regarding how to sign up for updates for general master planning updates or updates on individual regional planning efforts.
- Existing Natural Resources Board (NRB)-approved master plans are available for viewing from DNR's Completed Master Plans web tool at <https://apps.dnr.wi.gov/completedpropertyplanning/index.aspx>

Events

- Wheel & Sprocket Bike Expo – Milwaukee, April 9-12
- Healthy Communities Summit – Wausau, April 23-24
- Work Play Earth Day, various locations, month of April
- Peninsula Mountain Bike Trail Ribbon Cutting – Peninsula State Park, May 30
- Free Fun Weekend/National Trails Day - various locations, first weekend in June
- Brule River State Forest Mountain Bike Trail Ribbon Cutting – Brule River SF, June 6