

DNR Consultation Report
Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council meeting
September 17, 2025
DNR Consultation Report June – September 2025

Parks and Recreation Management Program Updates

General Program Updates

- Budget highlights:
 - The 2025-2027 Biennial State Budget was approved in July, as Wisconsin Act 15.
 - For the Wisconsin State Park System (WSPS) only a portion of enumerated projects/funding was approved. One project was full enumerated at \$6.5 million for Badger State Trail bridge repairs. Six other projects were earmarked for Building Trust Funds to start the design process. These six projects will need to be enumerated in a future budget for construction. Remaining enumeration requests were deferred or recommended for the all agency program, which has very limited funding.
 - The Governors 2025-27 Biennium Budget included over \$4 million across two years for removing hazardous trees on department-owned properties, which could help address the backlog of hazardous tree removals along linear state trails.
 - Summary documents including the governor's recommendations, veto message, enacted budget, etc. can be found on DOA's webpage.
 - Renewal of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was not included in Wisconsin Act 15 and there are currently separate bills proposed for renewal of the program.
- Friends Group Grant Opportunities:
 - **KNOWLES NELSON STEWARDSHIP GRANT** The Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program provides grants for Friends Groups and nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) up to \$20,000 to improve facilities, build new recreation projects and restore habitat on state properties. The program recognizes the important role Friends Groups play in meeting the development and restoration needs of state properties. Deadline: Nov. 15.
 - **HERITAGE TRUST FUND** The Wisconsin Legislature created the State Park and Forest Heritage Trust Fund to provide grants to Friends Groups for the maintenance and operations of state parks, southern state forests, state trails or state recreation areas. A Friends Group must have established an endowment fund for the benefit of the property. Only interest generated by the endowment fund can be used as the applicant's match. Deadline: Nov. 15.

Bike Trail Project Updates

- **Badger State Trail:** Design and engineering is progressing for the \$6.6 million Badger State Trail Stewart Tunnel replacement project. The project will proceed with repairs consistent with the scope of work described as Alternative 4 – Corrugated Metal Pipe Lining in the Stewart Tunnel Alternatives Analysis Report. It is estimated that construction will begin in 2026 with completion in 2027.
- **Bearskin State Trail** – the project to replace the trestle at County K has been completed.
- **Elroy Sparta State Trail** - Large bridge package is bidding this month. This project will replace and repair bridges on several segments of trail.
- Repairs to the **Gandy Dancer State Trail** Luck Bridge are complete and the trail is back open.

- **Glacial Drumlin State Trail** – West Segment trail resurfacing expected to start in Fall into 2026. The west segment begins at the trailhead at County Hwy N in Cottage Grove and travels to Junction Road east of State Hwy 26 north of Jefferson.
- **Great River State Trail** – The over 200 foot long and 68-year-old Tank Creek Bridge is currently closed due to damage from a fire on the evening of May 15, 2025. There were no injuries reported but the bridge is a total loss. The bridge extends through the upper Mississippi River valley and connects Trempealeau and Onalaska. DNR is working to prioritize the resources needed for design and construction of the replacement of bridge structure. The estimated timeline for reconstruction is 2028, pending available funding and resources. The DNR applied to the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) for grant funding to help cover the project costs.
- **Great Sauk State Trail**
 - Construction is in progress for the approximate \$12 million Dane County/Sauk County 500-foot bridge over the Wisconsin River connecting to the Great Sauk State Trail and Dane County's proposed Walking Iron Trail. Construction is anticipated to be complete by fall of 2026.
- **Military Ridge State Trail** – The 1.25-mile section of the Military Ridge State Trail that was closed from Epic Lane to Wildcat Way in Verona re-opened on August 29th just prior to Labor Day Weekend.
- **US Bike Route 30 Signage** – US Bike Route 30 is a 269-mile route that connects bicyclists across the state from east to west between Milwaukee and Bluff Siding on the Mississippi River and travels on over 170 miles of state trails. DNR staff have installed Route 30 signage on the Great River, La Crosse River, Elroy-Sparta and 400 state trails and are working to complete for the others to the east - the Glacial Drumlin, and Hank Aaron state trails.

Master Planning Updates

- Scoping public comment for the [Southern Lake Michigan Coastal Regional Master Plan](#) opened June 11 and closed July 16. An in-person open house meeting was held Monday June 23, 2025 at the Milwaukee Service Center. A [public comment summary](#) was posted to the DNR website on September 3rd. The planning team will now begin working through plan development. State trails covered by this master plan include the White River State Trail and Hank Aaron State Trail. Received several comments about adding more mountain bike trails and use of e-bikes on DNR lands and specific comments related to the Hank Aaron State Trail.
- Scoping public involvement for the [Central Lake Michigan Coastal Regional Master Plan](#) started 7/30 and was open until September 12th. An in person open house meeting was held August 13th in Green Bay, and two office hours opportunities were held, one at Kohler Andrae State Park on Aug 12th and the second at Navarino Wildlife Area on August 13th. State Trails covered by this plan include the Ahnapee, Fox River, Friendship, and Newton Blackmour state trails.
- Existing Natural Resources Board (NRB)-approved master plans are available for viewing from DNR's Completed Master Plans web tool at <https://dnr.wi.gov/CompletedPropertyPlans/index.aspx>.
- 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.

Events

- DNR partnered with several organizations to host a Universal Recreation Day at Pike Lake in September, including Emerys Cycling, Triathlon & Fitness bike shop who brought a variety of adaptive bikes for folks to try out.
- 125th Anniversary: The Wisconsin State Park System continues to celebrate its 125th Anniversary and has a large 125th Anniversary celebration is coming up this weekend on September 20th at Interstate State Park on Saturday September 20th, 2025 from 9am to 4pm. The day will feature a variety of

activities that highlight the history, outdoor recreation, and conservation. Find more information and full schedule on the [125th Anniversary webpage](#) and [DNR Event Calendar](#).

- Monthly Adult Bike Ride – Saturday, Sept. 20th at 10am: 2-5 mile bike ride with camp hosts through Buckhorn State Park.
- For a full list of events check out the [DNR events page](#).