

DNR Consultation Report
Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council meeting
September 16, 2026
DNR Consultation Report July – September 2026

Parks and Recreation Management (PRM) Program Updates

General Program Updates

- Jan-July 2026 Visitation: **11,285,949**
- The program participated in the Wisconsin State Fair selling admission and trail passes and merchandise.
- The ability to purchase 12-month admission passes when you complete your online vehicle registration with WisDOT/DMV launched earlier this year. In late August the system surpassed \$1.0 million in sales. Online sales have also remained steady.
- The program will again partner with the Department of Tourism on an expanded Wonders Campaign with UW Badger Athletes for a late 2026/2027 campaign.
- The 27-29 program capital development budget was submitted to the Department for review and approval. The total budget request is currently estimated at just under \$600 million and includes significant trail bridge and roadwork packages.
- DNR staff headquartered in GEF II in Madison will be moving to Hill Farms on the west side of Madison. The service center located in GEF II will be permanently closing. The Fitchburg service center will remain open.
- The program has partnered with Good Solutions Group and Progressive Insurance to produce several new publications promoting outdoor recreation. The pocket guide will be available at parks starting in late October. The mountain bike guide is currently available and will be reprinted and more widely available in spring 2027. Guides focused on properties within one hour of major Wisconsin destinations will be available in late 2026 throughout the state. Several other publications are currently in products and will be available in 2027.
- The Wisconsin State Park System strategic plan is currently being drafted. Meetings with partners and staff are starting to wrap up.
- Partners of the Fish, Wildlife and Parks division continue to meet as part of the Outdoor Consortium discussing funding shortfalls within the division.
- Recreation liaisons continue to work on updating MOAs with cooperative partners across the state.
- Fall marketing and outreach promotions will focus on the WisDOT collaboration, admission and trail pass sales, hidden gems and fall color.

Bike Trail Project Updates

DNR Trail Projects

- **Badger State Trail Stewart Tunnel** – Project is nearing completion with repairs consistent with the scope of work described as Alternative 4 – Corrugated Metal Pipe Lining in the Stewart Tunnel Alternatives Analysis Report. Construction started in April with anticipated late 2026/early 2027 completion. An updated project timeline for completion and reopening of the tunnel will likely be announced later this fall.
- **Military Ridge State Trail**
 - A 0.75-mile segment of the Military Ridge State Trail near Epic Lane in Verona will be closed through September 2027 (except for snowmobile season) due to construction of Hyper Drive.

- A 0.7-mile section of the Military Ridge Trail west of Verona (from Cty Hwy PD to Paulson Rd.) will be closed for bridge maintenance beginning Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2026. This section will be closed for about 3 weeks and will reopen once repairs are complete.
 - Reconstruction and expansion of Riley parking lot and a new gravel parking lot in Klevenville are in the design phase with construction anticipated to start in 2027.
 - Several bridge replacements are in the design phase for the section of trail between Verona Area High School and Paulson Road. Construction is anticipated to start in 2027, pending funding approval.
- **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 has been completed. 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 starting in October.
- **Great River State Trail** – The bridge over Tank Creek continues to be closed until further notice due to damage from a fire on the bridge. Design is currently underway for the bridge replacement project, which will include the replacement of three additional bridge structures necessary for construction access. The project is expected to go to the State Building Commission (SBC) in October for approval to proceed with construction. Pending SBC approval and available funding, the tentative estimated schedule is to start construction in 2027 with completion in 2028.
- **Chippewa River State Trail** - A 12-mile section of the Chippewa River Trail from Fuller Road to the junction with the Red Cedar Trail will be resurfaced beginning Sept. 15, 2026. This section may be closed during construction. Work is tentatively scheduled to last through fall 2026.
- **Glacial Drumlin State Trail** - A 0.7-mile segment of the Glacial Drumlin State Trail, between Hwy. 67 and Opengate Ct. (just east of Dousman), will be temporarily closed from Tuesday, Sept. 8 through early November 2026 for utility rerouting and trail improvements.
- **Hank Aaron State Trail**
 - The River Loop section of Hank Aaron State Trail is closed through at least October 2026 for replacement of the 16th St. bridge. The trail along Canal St. (between 13th and 25th streets) will remain open during this time.
[City of Milwaukee 16th Street Bridge Rehabilitation Project \[exit DNR\]](#)
 - A section of the Hank Aaron Trail (at 32nd St. and Canal St.) will be closed until further notice due to ongoing work with the I-94 project. A detour route adjacent to the trail will be in place utilizing the north lane of Canal St.
- **Red Cedar Trail**
 - Construction on Hwy. 29 near the north trailhead of the Red Cedar State Trail will begin on Aug. 26 and continue through fall 2026. The Depot Visitor Center will remain open, however, the parking lot will be closed to vehicle access.
 - Work to replace a culvert on the Red Cedar State Trail south of Menomonie will begin on Sept. 28 and continue through Oct. 2026. A 1.5-mile section of trail will be closed between markers 1.5 and 3. A town road can be used to detour around the closure.
- Check the [DNR Property Condition Notices webpage](#) for current notices for Wisconsin State Park Properties, including trail closures.

Partnership Trail Projects

- **Military Ridge State Trail Verona Segment**
 - Through a partnership agreement with DNR, the City of Verona is moving forward with the replacement of 3 bridges paving for the 2-mile segment from Old Highway PB to Verona Area High School. The bridge between Franklin and Lincoln Streets will be replaced beginning mid-September 2026. This section will be closed from approx. Sept 14 – Nov. 13, 2026. Temporary detours will be in place around

the closure. Construction for the other two replacements is expected to start in spring 2027. After the bridges are replaced, the City will be paving this section of trail.

- **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. Construction for the 3-mile Walking Iron Trail (Phase 2) started in August 2026 and is expected to be completed in 2027. The Hwy 78 parking lot will be closed during construction from Aug to mid-October 2026.
- **Glacial Drumlin Capital City Trail Connector Phase 1**
 - DNR and Dane County are entering into a Memorandum of Agreement for Phase 1 of the Glacial Drumlin Capital City Connector Trail, a new segment of the Glacial Drumlin State Trail that will be developed and maintained by Dane County. Trail construction is anticipated to start in summer/fall of 2027. The trail corridor is located on a combination of DNR and County-owned land. Approximately 1.3 miles of trail will be constructed on DNR fee and eased land. Phase 1 extends from the eastern I-39/90 right-of-way to County Highway AB and will include a mix of paved trail, bridges, and boardwalks. Future phases will ultimately complete the last missing segments of the Glacial Drumlin State Trail.
- **Great Sauk State Trail Devil's Lake Segment**
 - Sauk County in collaboration with Dane County is hosting an event on November 5, 2026 to celebrate a major milestone in the Wisconsin River Recreational Bridge and Gateway Park project. An official grand opening will be held in 2027 when Phase 2, Dane County's Walking Iron Trail, is complete.
 - DNR entered into a Land Use Agreement with Sauk County allowing them to design and construct the Devil's Lake Segment of the Great Sauk State Trail that will create a connection on DNR land from Halweg Road to the South Shore Day Use Area and from County Hwy DL to the North Shore Day Use Area. Sauk County expects to contract with a qualified consultant later this fall for design and construction administration services for the Devil's Lake segment and a spur trail connection to Baraboo.
- **White River State Trail**
 - DNR is working to resolve encroachment issues along the segments in Racine County. The County has a pending donation that would allow them to minimally develop segments of the trail for general universal recreation opportunities.
 - Significant damage was reported on the Walworth County segment of the trails due to late summer storms. The county has completed most repairs.
 - The removal of the 67th Dr. Trestle started September 8th. Removal and creation of the future at-grade crossing is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. This is part of a road project being done by the Towns of Yorkville and Union Grove.

Master Planning Updates

- [North Central Forest Proposed Regional Master Plan and Environmental Analysis](#) was approved by the NRB, as written on April 15th. The final plan is now available on the Department's website.
 - Biking related highlights include: Proposed bicycle trail loop to be developed at Flambeau River State Forest. E-bikes are proposed to add as a use alongside traditional bicycles at state trails and on Brunet Island State Park bicycle trails and on Flambeau River State Forest. Wildlife areas have the opportunity to open entire areas of properties to bicycle or e-bike use off trail, as appropriate
- The [Wolf River State Trail \(Langlade County\)](#) Draft Plan is in development after concluding scoping public involvement this summer. Most of the comments were focused on the specific 10.6-mile segment in Langlade County that is currently closed to motorized recreation during the summer months. A summary of the public input received is now available on the Department's website. A draft plan likely won't be ready before 2028.

- [Western Coulees and Ridges Proposed Regional Master Plan](#) is in development after concluding the draft comment period this summer. The department anticipates bringing the proposed plan to the Natural Resources Board in the next 3-6 months.
- 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.
- 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

- Explore the Outdoors Expo, May 16 at Havenwoods State Forest
- Continuing to host learn-to events for hiking, mountain biking and camping throughout the fall and into spring 2027