

Indian Lake County Park/ Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area

Draft Master Plan Review

Chris James
Park Planning Manager
September 26th, 2023



Meeting Overview

- Introductions
- Public Information Meeting Notice Overview
- Purpose of Meeting and Master Plan
- Planning Area Boundary
- History of Park and Wildlife Area Properties
- Inventory and Analysis Summary
- Planning Process Overview and Public Input Summary
- Vision Statement and Draft Plan Recommendations
- Plan Timeline
- Next Steps
- Public Input Session



Public Information Meeting Notice

- Updated Dane County Project Page 9/8
- Posted Meeting Notice in Park at 3 Locations 9/9
- Press Release 9/11
- Mailed Town Board and Public Information Meeting Notice to All Neighbors Adjacent to Park and WA Week of 9/11
- Emailed Press Release to Town of Berry 9/12
- Emailed Master Plan web link to Town of Berry board 9/14
- Posted to Next Door 9/14(156,00+ members)
- Posted on Dane County Parks Events Webpage 9/14
- Posted on Dane County Facebook/Instagram (10,000 followers)

Purpose of the Meeting

- Provide Updated Information about the Park Planning Process
- Review Draft Plan Recommendations for the Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Master Plan
- Listen to Town, Neighbor, Park Visitors & Other Stakeholder Input

Why do a Park Master Plan?

- A process to determine the suitability of the land for future restoration areas and development of park and recreation facilities. (soils, slopes, vegetation, micro climates, existing recreation uses, trail connectivity, views, cultural/historical features, etc.)
- To determine what types of recreation & park program areas could occur within the park.
- To provide a forum that allows public/stakeholders to give input throughout the planning process.
- To aid in the preparation of preliminary cost estimates & budgeting for capital improvements.
- To enable eligibility to participate in certain grant programs.

But most importantly.....

- To provide **a common vision** for phased park facility development & park land management **that balances public use with resource protection.**

Planning Boundary

Dane County Parks
Always in State

Map 3-1 Planning Boundary Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Draft Master Plan

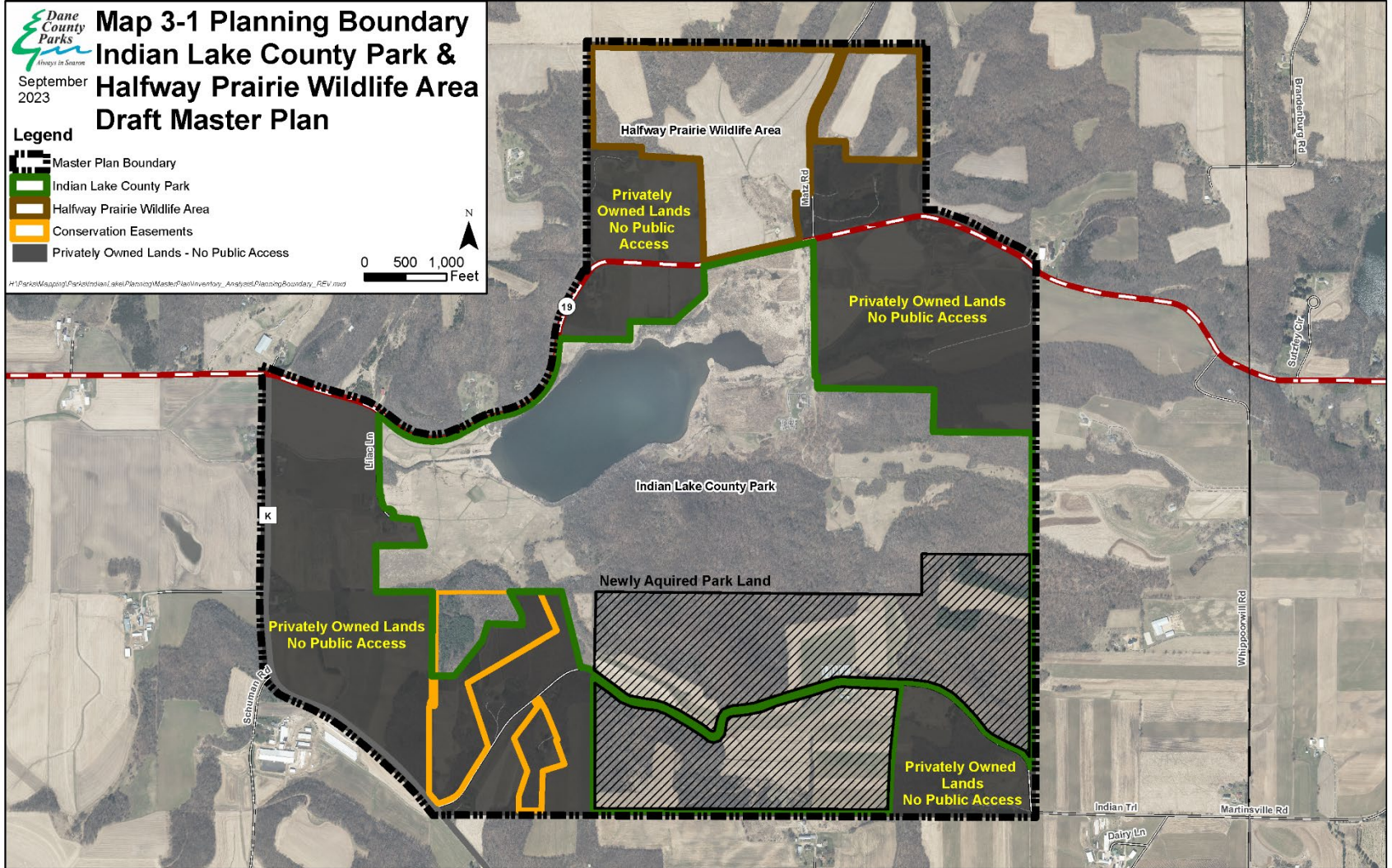
September 2023

Legend

- Master Plan Boundary
- Indian Lake County Park
- Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area
- Conservation Easements
- Privately Owned Lands - No Public Access

0 500 1,000 Feet

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Indian Lake County Park

Halfway Prairie WA Natural History

- Glaciers influenced the Indian Lake region landscape 12,000+ years ago.
- Indian Lake lies along the transition of the southern edge of the non-glaciated or “driftless region”.
- Steep slopes of exposed rock indicate the valley was never completely covered with ice.
- Large boulders found in the draws and on the valley floor could only have been brought here by a finger of ice, which fanned out from the main body of the glacier.
- The lake is a shallow kettle lake created when the glacier retreated.
- The outwash plain surrounding the lake was formed when glacial melt water carried large volumes of silt and sand into the valley.

Dane County Natural History Marker, Indian Lake, 1977

- The Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor traverses through Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area

Natural History

What You Need to Know

- Indian Lake landscape was created by glaciers 12,000 years ago.
- The park is on the southern boundary of where the last glacier retreated and at the transition into the “driftless region” of southwest Wisconsin.
- Nearly all of Indian Lake County Park and Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area are within the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor.
- [The Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor is intended to highlight and preserve pre-settlement glacial landscapes.](#)

Indian Lake County Park Halfway Prairie WA Cultural History

- This region was first inhabited by Native American people more than 12,000 years ago. (WHS)
- The lake area was used by Native American people for fishing and hunting 5000-8000 years ago. (WHS)
- In 1830, Chief Black Hawk and people of the Sauk tribe were ordered to abandon their ancestral lands on the Rock River. The band moved several times throughout NE Iowa, NW Illinois and SW Wisconsin while being pursued by volunteer soldiers and the US Army. Chief Black Hawk and his band continued north through the Blue Mound/Mazomanie region and were eventually captured in 1832 near Wisconsin Dells. (WHS)
- Native American people continued to camp, fish and hunt in the lake area for several years after the first Europeans settled around the lake in the 1850s. *Dane County Place-Names, Frederic G. Cassidy, 1947*
- "The name "Indian Lake" first appeared on a map in 1873, but was surely in use long before that date." *Dane County Place-Names, Frederic G. Cassidy, 1947*

Cultural History

What You Need to Know

- Native American people first lived in this region 12,000+ years ago.
- The Indian Lake area was used by Native American people beginning 8,000 years ago to as recent as the mid to late 1800's.
- Chief Black Hawk and his band were driven from ancestral lands in northeastern Iowa. They attempted to relocate further north several times. He was captured near the Wisconsin Dells in 1832 after several small battles with volunteer militia and the army. **Indian Lake was not a significant historical aspect of his retreat.**
- There are 6 recorded archaeological sites in the park.

Indian Lake County Park

Halfway Prairie WA History 1848-2022

- **1848**-Kohlmann's settle just west of the lake.
- **1852**-Property east of the current park that includes chapel area was homesteaded by John Endres family.
- **Circa 1855**-Diphtheria epidemic spreads into Wisconsin, John Endres family loses 2 children.
- **1857**-John Endres builds St. Mary of the Oaks chapel to provide a spiritual thanks for the rest of his family being spared from the flu virus.
- **1923**-John Endres farm sold to Henry Ballweg family.
- **1959**-John A. and Jeanette Marx purchase former John Endres farm.
- **1963**-Marx family donates chapel and surrounding land including access to STH 19 to Dane County Park Commission.
- **1974**-Kohlmann House listed on NRHP.
- **1975**-Dane County Parks acquires additional property and creates 442 acre Indian Lake Park. Scoutcraft Log Cabin (1926) moved to park.
- **2013**-Dane County Parks acquires former 149 acre Matz property for IAT corridor, becomes Half Way Prairie Wildlife Area.
- **2020**-Dane County Park acquires former 295 acre Dega property south of park. Indian Lake becomes largest Dane County Park.

Settlement History

What You Need to Know

- European settlers first began to homestead in the Indian Lake area in the late 1840's.
- Matz, Endres, Schumann and Kohlmann were the first Europeans to settle around Indian Lake.
- The Scoutcraft Log Cabin (group camp) was originally constructed at Camp Indianola on the north shore of Lake Mendota, it was moved to Indian Lake County Park in 1975.
- The Kohlmann House and Frederick Schumann Farmstead are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The Matz Farmstead outbuilding is on the WHS Architecture and History Inventory
- St. Mary of the Oaks Chapel and Matz Farmstead may be eligible for National Register of Historic Places.

Inventory and Analysis

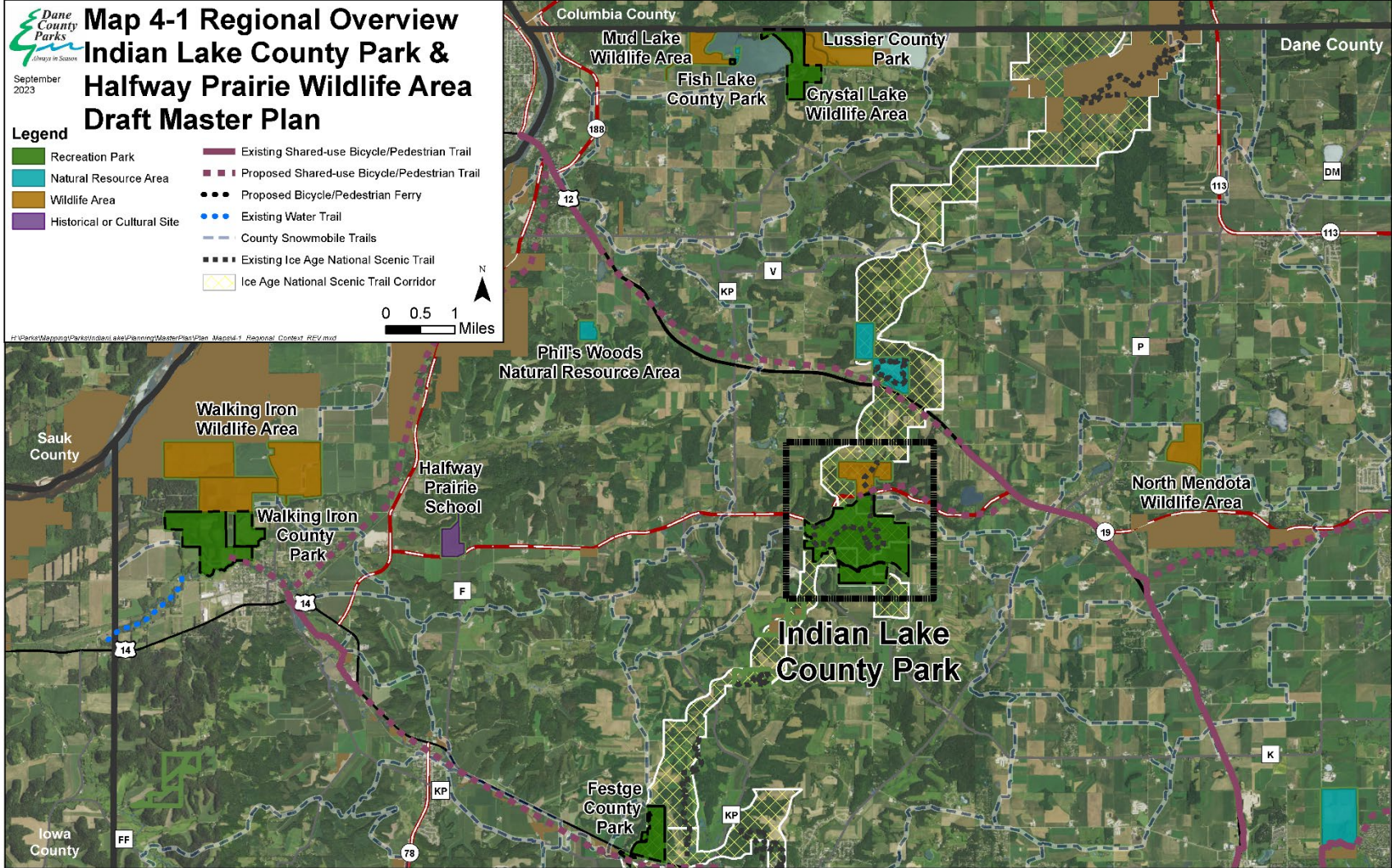
What's Out There?

- Planning review of existing natural, cultural and historical features; grant restrictions, and other public lands and trails in the project area boundary.
- Primary purpose is to collect planning information that is useful for deciding where/if future development of park facilities and program areas could occur.
- It also is helpful for identifying where larger scale ecosystems co-exist in the planning area (woodlands, wetlands, prairie) that can provide guidance for future land management goals.

Inventory and Analysis Overview

- Regional Context
- Land Cover and Vegetation
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Soils and Topography
- Recreation Facilities and Use
- Cultural and Historic Features
- Existing Property Special Designations

Regional Context



Regional Context Analysis

- Scale and location of Indian Lake County Park make it ideal for interpretation of glacial history.
- Transportation options to get to the park are limited.
- Lake related recreation opportunities are limited in the southwest driftless region of Dane County.
- Rugged glacial terrain is ideal for expanding trail based recreation.

Land Cover & Vegetation

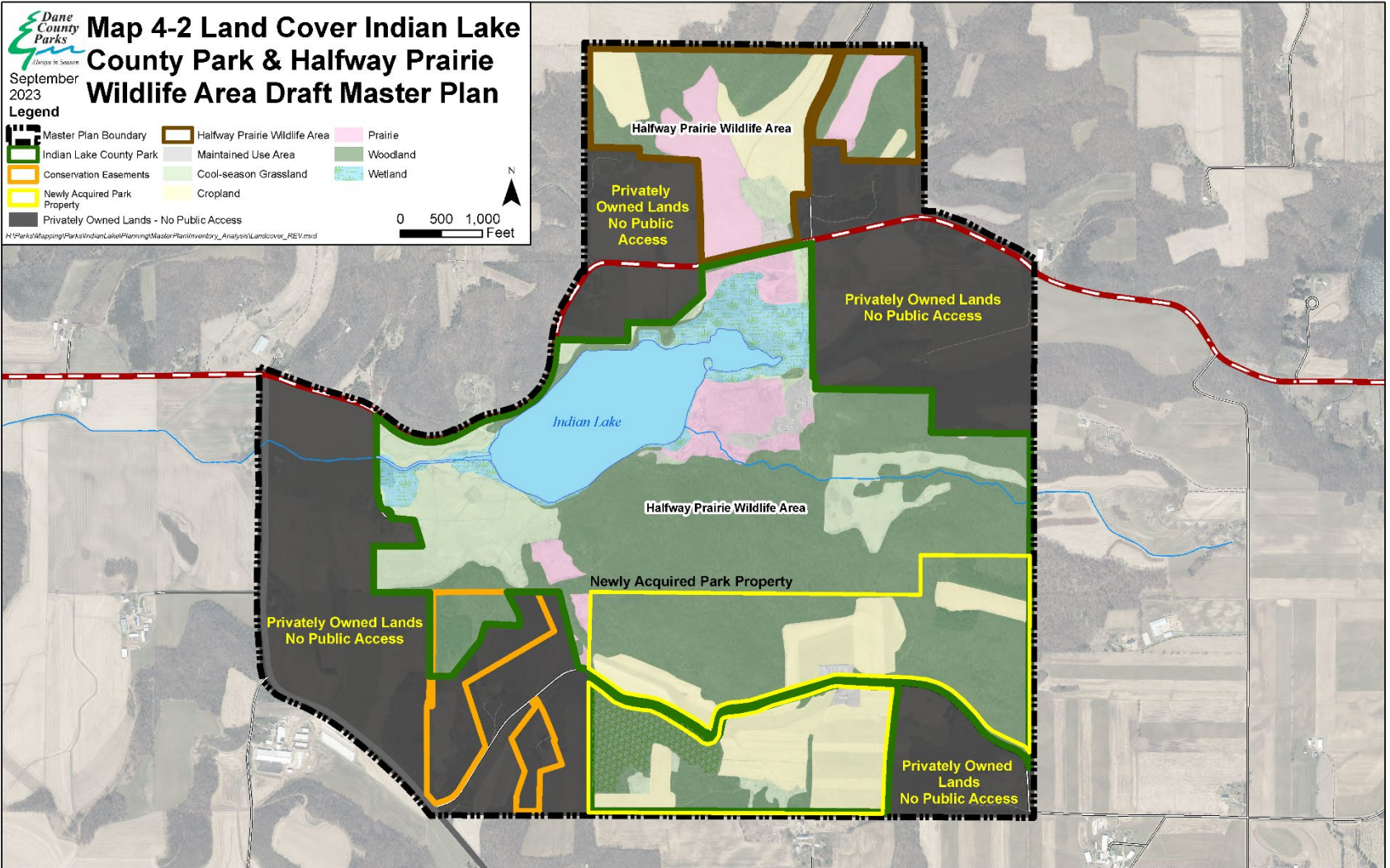
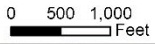


Map 4-2 Land Cover Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Draft Master Plan

September 2023

Legend

- Master Plan Boundary
- Indian Lake County Park
- Conservation Easements
- Newly Acquired Park Property
- Privately Owned Lands - No Public Access
- Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area
- Maintained Use Area
- Cool-season Grassland
- Cropland
- Prairie
- Woodland
- Wetland



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Land Cover and Vegetation Analysis

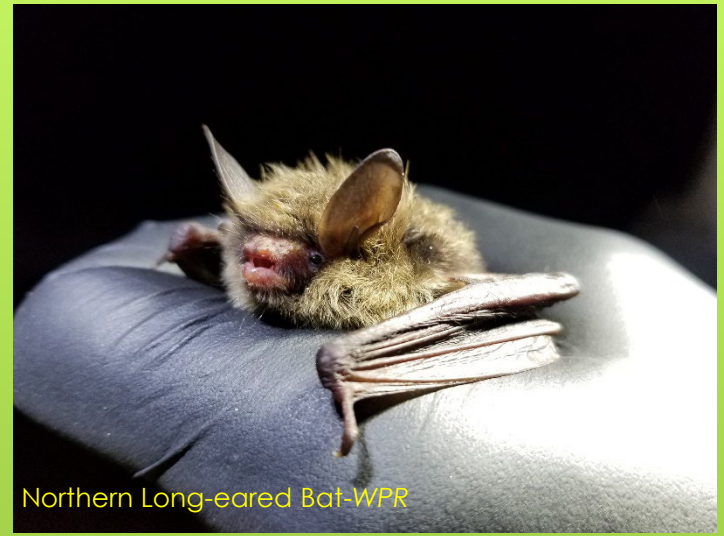
- Mix of large scale open grassland/agriculture and contiguous woodlot provide excellent habitat for a variety of diverse plant and animal species.
- Park and wildlife area are relatively undeveloped and provide a unique semi remote experience in close proximity to a large urban area.

Threatened and Endangered Species Inventory

- Wisconsin DNR Endangered Resources Preliminary Assessment request in April of 2022: **Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, Northern Long-eared Bat, Prairie Leafhopper, Prairie Vole, Wilcox's Panic Grass, and Eastern Pipistrelle**. In addition, this area has been identified as a Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Federal High Potential Zone. Park and wildlife area are relatively undeveloped and provide a unique semi remote experience in close proximity to a large urban area.



Eastern Pipistrelle-WDNR



Northern Long-eared Bat-WPR



© MTNHP - Bonnie Heidel

Prairie Vole-Severson Dells Nature Center



A Leafhopper-Prairie Haven

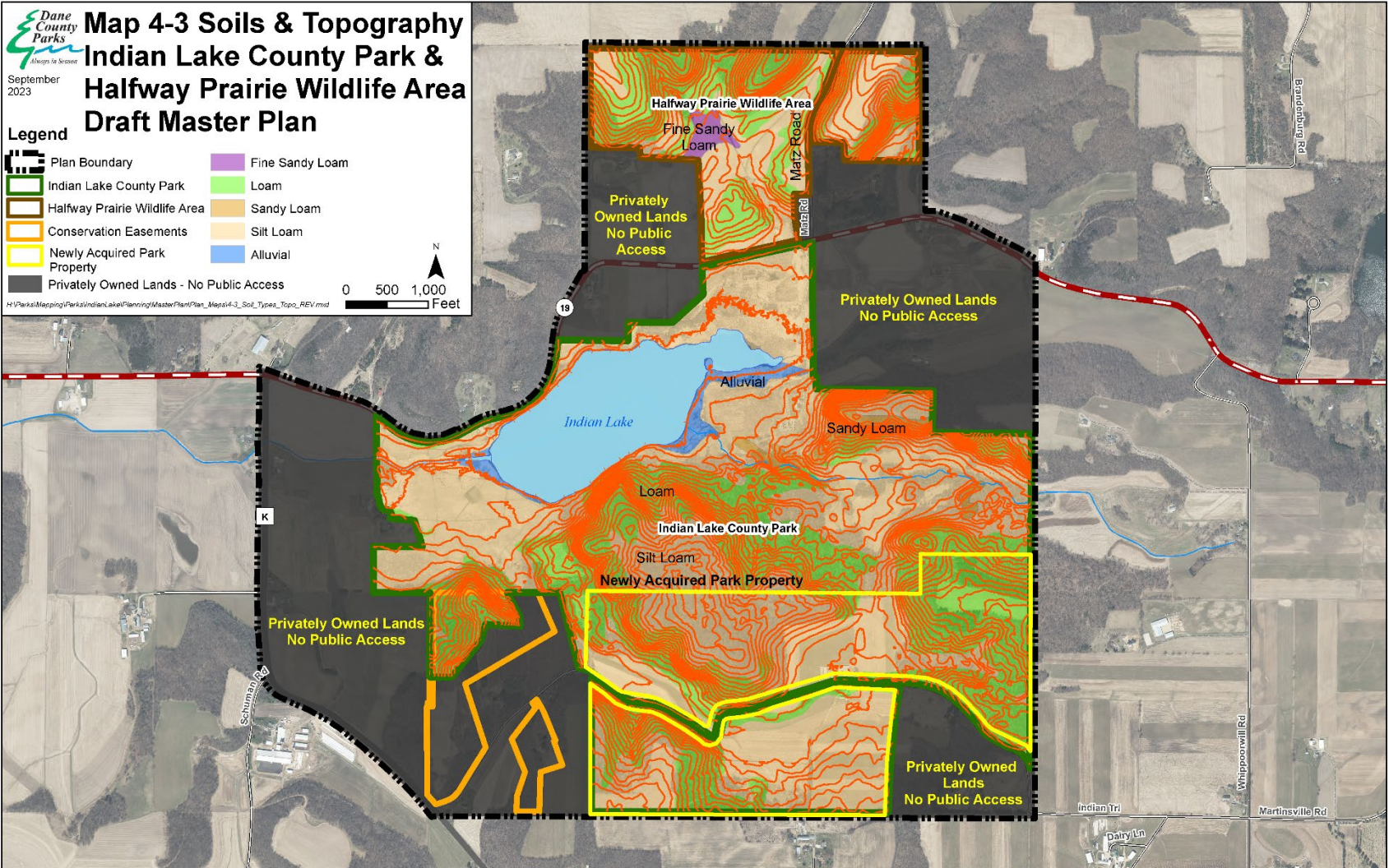


Rusty Patched Bumble Bee-Wisconsin Audubon

Threatened and Endangered Species Analysis

- The large contiguous woodland areas in this project area provide exceptional bat habitat. Large dead or hollow trees should be left standing unless they are creating a potential public safety issues in areas of high use. The ongoing prairie and savanna restoration projects will expand suitable habitat areas for many of the other listed species.

Soils and Topography



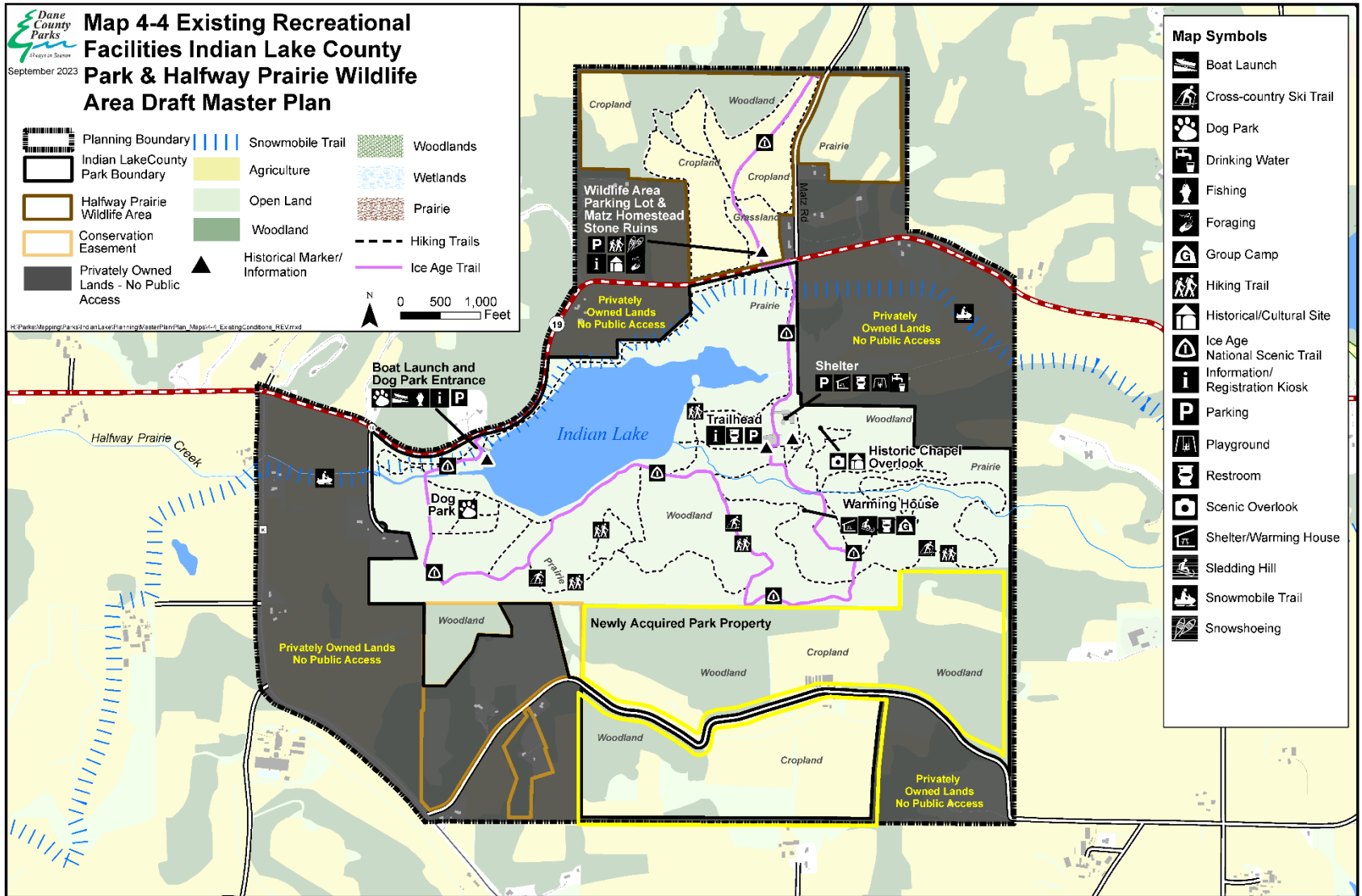
Soils and Topography Analysis

- The combination of thin loamy soils and steep topography limit suitable park and trail development areas.
- Soils and steep topography park development suitability limitations are also an opportunity for continued preservation of the rugged glacial landscapes in the park and wildlife area.
- Rugged topography provides premier hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoe trail recreation opportunities.

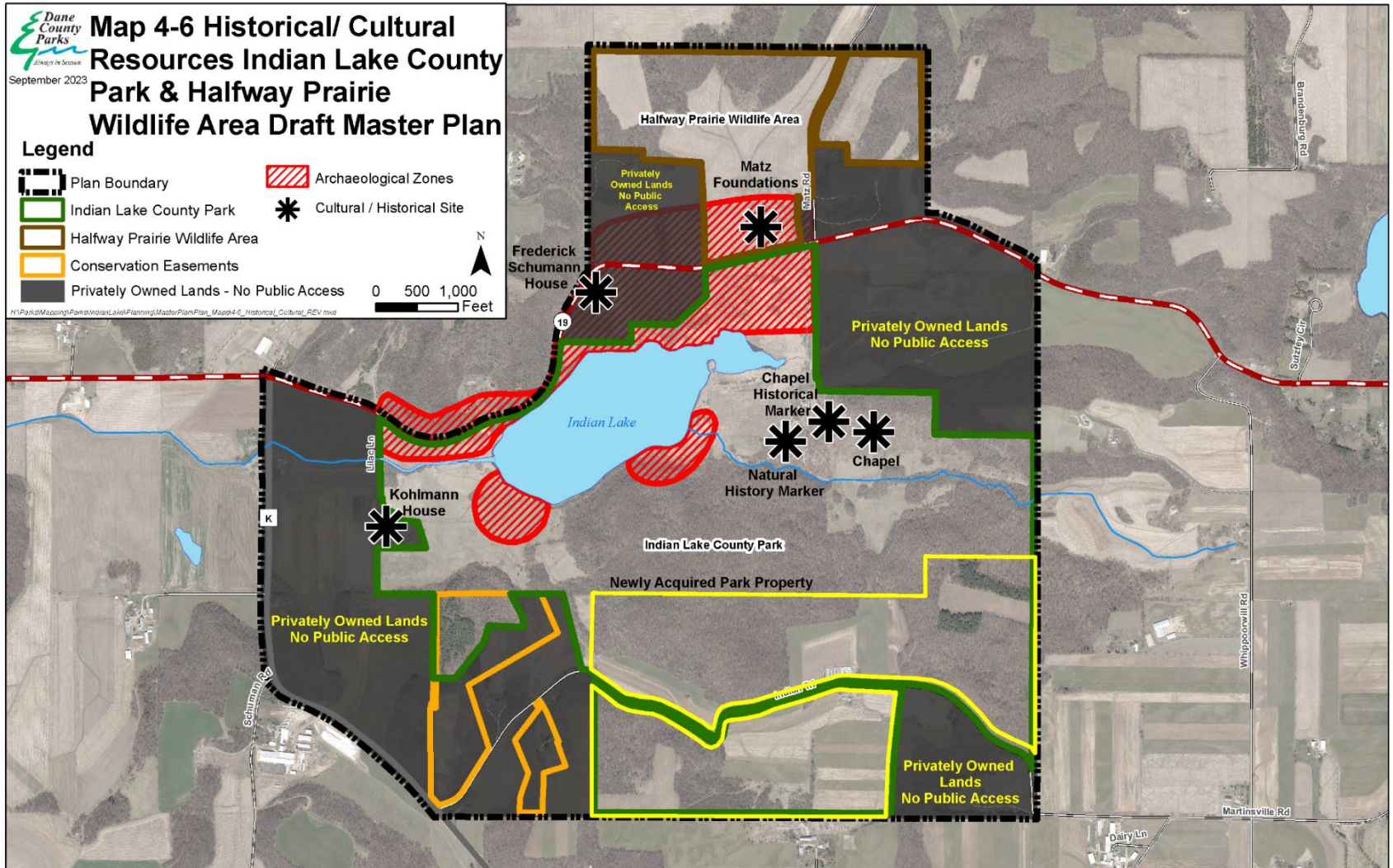
Existing Recreation and Facilities Inventory

- Indian Lake County Park is classified as a recreation park and has a wider variety of more developed opportunities that include a dog park, paddling, fishing, archery hunting by permit, groomed cross country skiing, picnicking and hiking. *Soils and steep topography park development suitability limitations are also an opportunity for continued preservation of the rugged glacial landscapes in the park and wildlife area.*
- Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area recreation use includes hunting, hiking, wildlife observation, non-groomed cross country skiing, and snowshoeing.
- A common thread between both properties is the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

Existing Recreation



Historical/Cultural Resources



Cultural/Historical Feature Inventory and Analysis

- High concentration of Native American recorded cultural sites along the STH 19 Corridor and around the lake.
- Historical features around the park include private residential dwellings, Matz Farm remnants HPWA; and the chapel.

Analysis:

- Historical settlement history signage opportunities from vistas within the park.
- Areas of high density cultural features should be avoided or Phase 1 tested prior to considering park development.

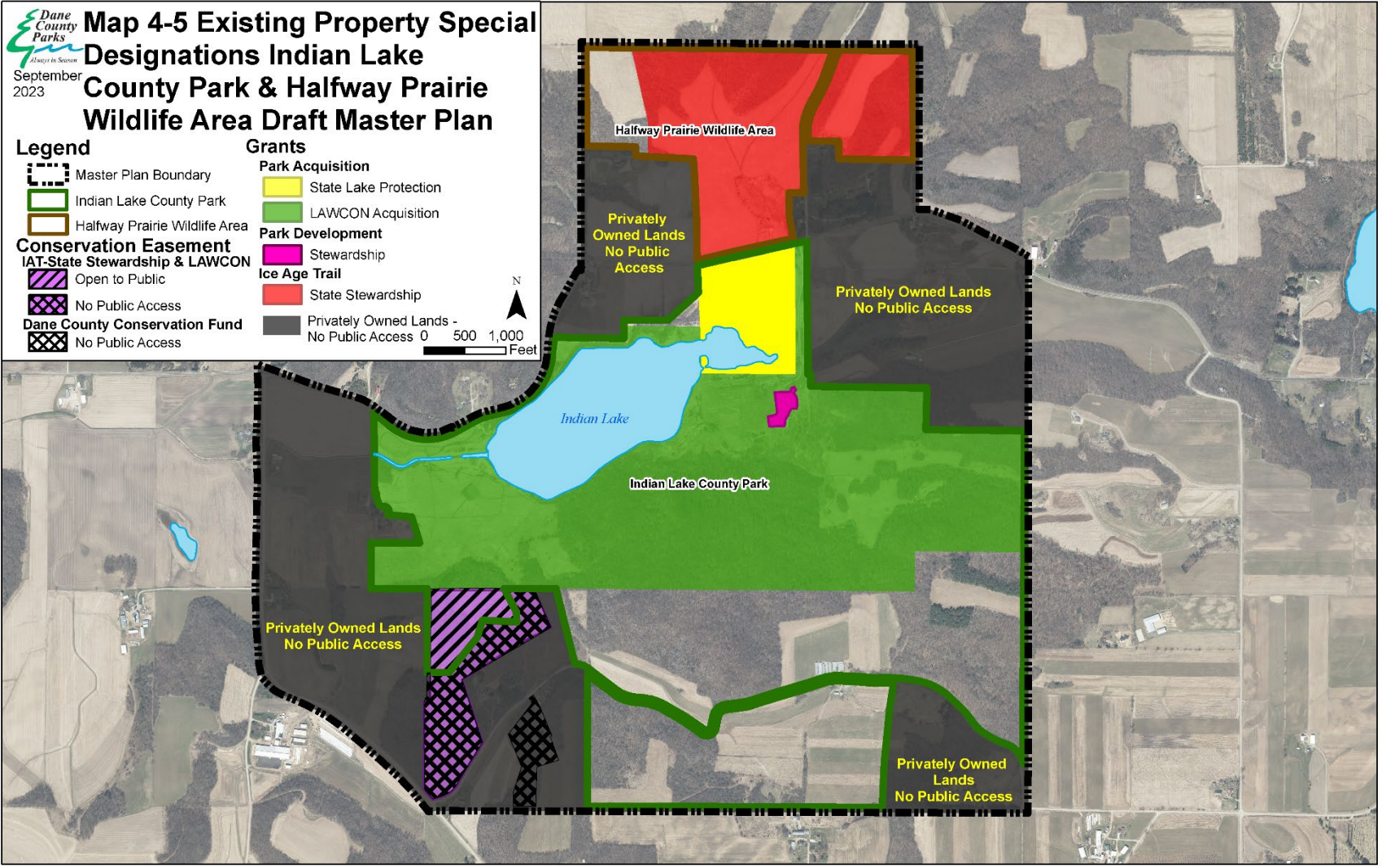
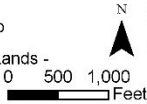
Existing Property Special Designations

Dane County Parks
Always in Season
 September 2023

Map 4-5 Existing Property Special Designations Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Draft Master Plan

Legend

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|
|  | Master Plan Boundary |  | Park Acquisition |
|  | Indian Lake County Park |  | State Lake Protection |
|  | Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area |  | LAWCON Acquisition |
|  | Conservation Easement |  | Park Development |
|  | IAT-State Stewardship & LAWCON |  | Stewardship |
|  | Open to Public |  | Ice Age Trail |
|  | No Public Access |  | State Stewardship |
|  | No Public Access |  | Privately Owned Lands - No Public Access |
|  | Dane County Conservation Fund | | |
|  | No Public Access | | |

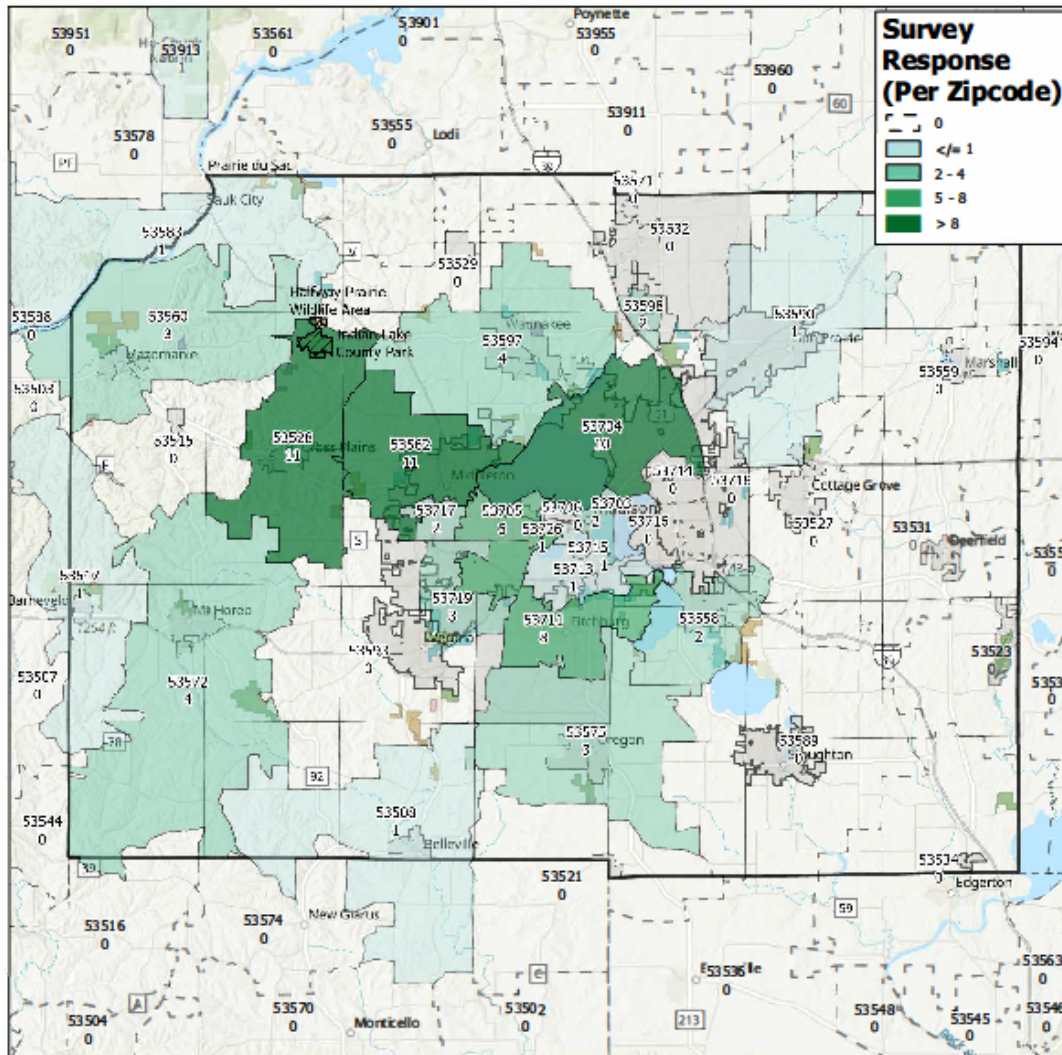
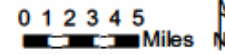


Planning Process Overview

- Two PIM's spring, Town of Berry/Heritage Center 2022.
- Presentation Berry Town Board Jun. 2022, Sept. 2023
- Online Survey 123 responses; 20%(+?) Berry Residents
- LWRD/Parks Staff Input Meetings Spring-Fall 2022
- Stakeholder/Friends Input 2022
- Wrote Draft Plan Winter 2023
- **Internal Draft Plan Review Spring-Summer2023**
- Draft Plan Review Fall 2023-**You Are Here!**

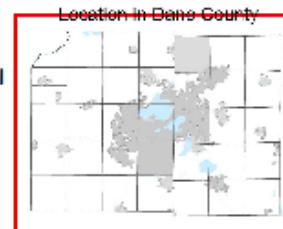
Indian Lake Park Master Plan

Survey Response Summary



Legend

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|
| County Boundary | Town | Wildlife |
| City | Recreation Park | Historical |
| Village | Natural Resource Area | Forest |
| | | Trails |



Data Sources:

Digital Orthophoto (Dane County 2020)

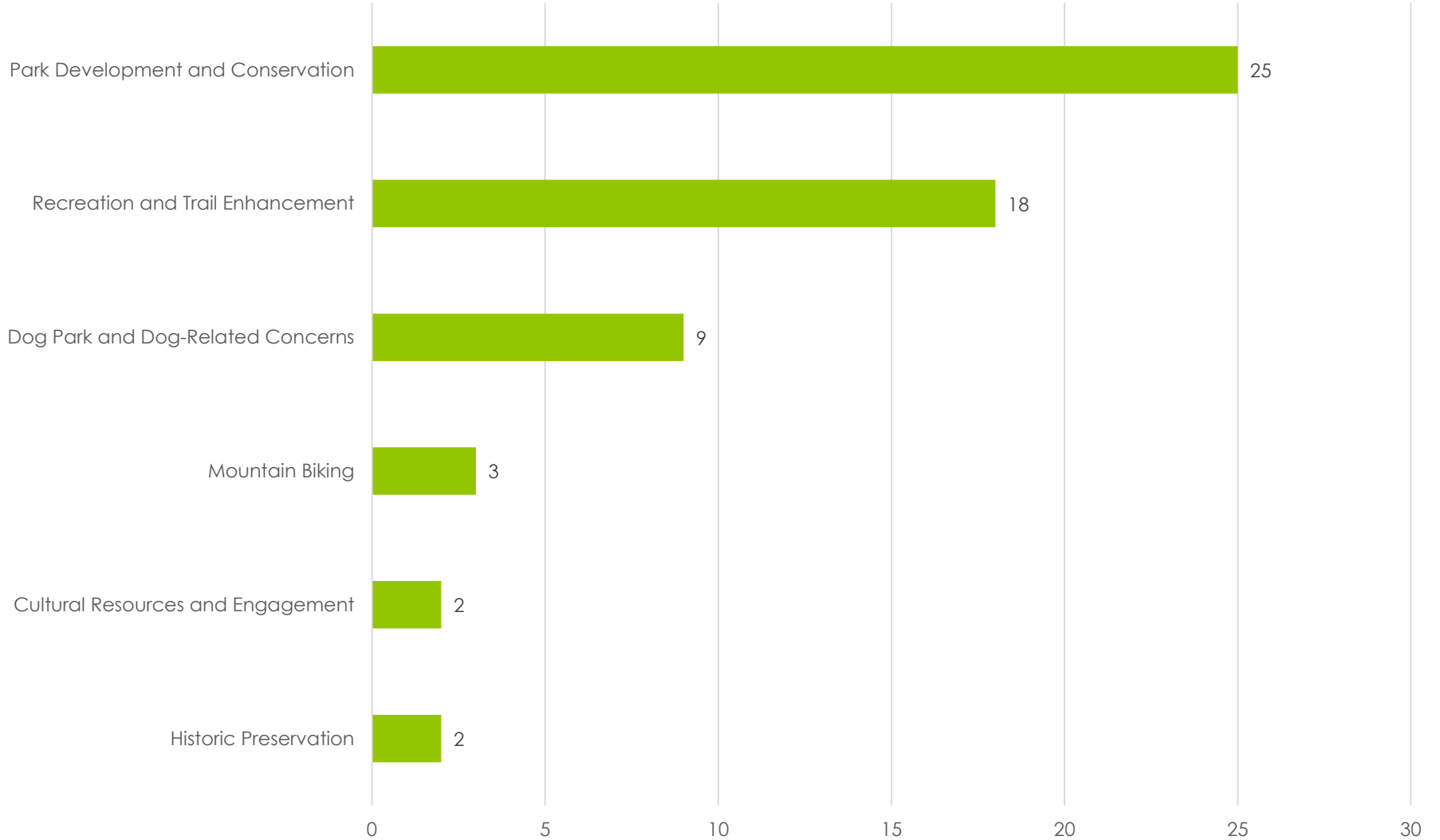
Created by Dane County Land & Water Resources Department, January 1, 2023

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Date Printed: 9/25/2023

Survey Written Comment Themes

May-Sept 2022



Public Input Comments Local

- Neighbor concerns regarding trespassing with increased park use.
- Town road (Indian Trail Rd.) maintenance concerns.
- Town loss of farm land and development potential concerns.
- Neighbor loss of working farm land concerns.

Overall Town/neighbor concerns related to loss of farm land, tax revenue loss and impact of public use on adjacent neighboring properties.



Public Input Summary External

- Enjoy the park as is, retain natural character.
- Don't over develop the park or new additional lands.
- Overall satisfaction with existing facilities, exception signage.
- Dog park should be fenced, parking improvements and water access needed.
- More trails needed, resolve conflict between groomed ski trails and hikers/dogs.
- Parking capacity issues at main parking lot.

Overall theme of high satisfaction with the park as it currently is and maintaining the Ice Age Trail National Scenic Trail corridor landscape trended toward much lower impact park recreation recommendations.

Park Vision Statement

Indian Lake County Park/Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area will remain relatively undeveloped, with an emphasis on continued large-scale prairie and savanna restoration in open areas and management of the existing contiguous woodlands that provide exceptional bat habitat. The rugged, natural landscape of this park highlights the glacial history that is interpreted through the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor. Providing additional hiking/snowshoe trails in the southern third of the park will allow better separation from groomed cross country ski trails during winter months and greater mileage of hiking opportunities in the summer. Existing agriculture lands will include prairie buffer strips to improve pollinator habitat and reduce sediment delivery into the Halfway Prairie creek watershed. A proposed future shelter area and internal park road extension will reduce park congestion and improve accessibility to the group camp region. Trails will continue to be the primary recreation use; and will include enhanced historical, cultural and natural feature interpretive signage. Improvements to the dog park area will include fencing, a beach and relocated parking that will provide separation from the lake access area. Restoring a year-round sustainable lake ecosystem is a priority.

Draft Plan Recommendations

The planning process evaluated existing cultural, natural and historical features in the planning area and incorporated public, stakeholder, and staff input to create draft plan recommendations

- Public/stakeholder input.*
- Dane County Parks staff input.*
- Dane County Park Commission input.*
- Survey responses.*
- Inventory and analysis planning considerations outlined in Section IV of the plan report.*



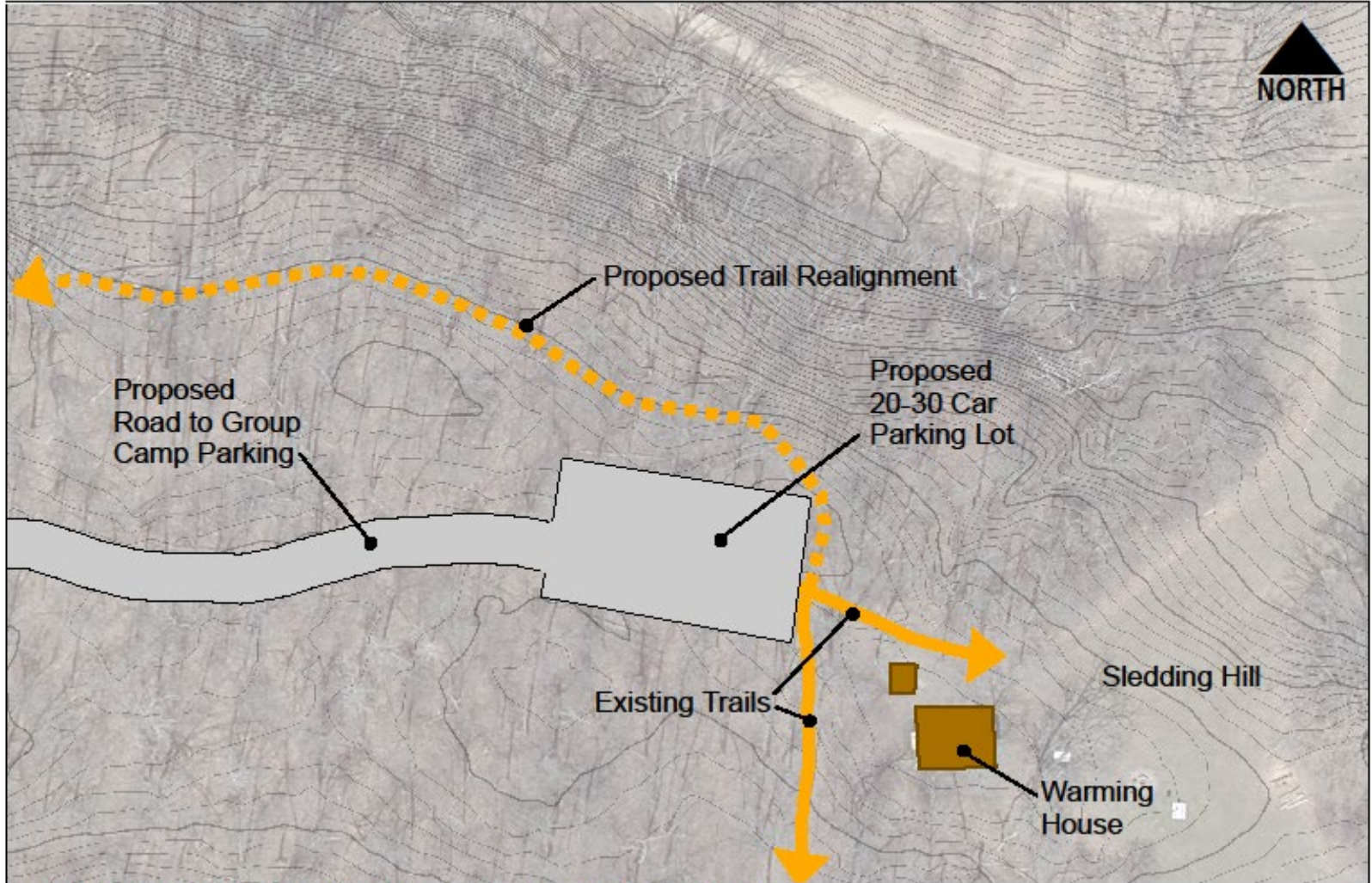
Draft Plan Recommendations

ROADWAY AND PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

- Expanded vehicle and parking access to the group camp area of the park to improve accessibility and walk in access to south.
- Additional parking lot and proposed future shelter site to address capacity issues.
- Maintenance road from Indian Trail Road to group camp.
- Ten to fifteen car parking lot at former greenhouse location on Indian Trail Road.



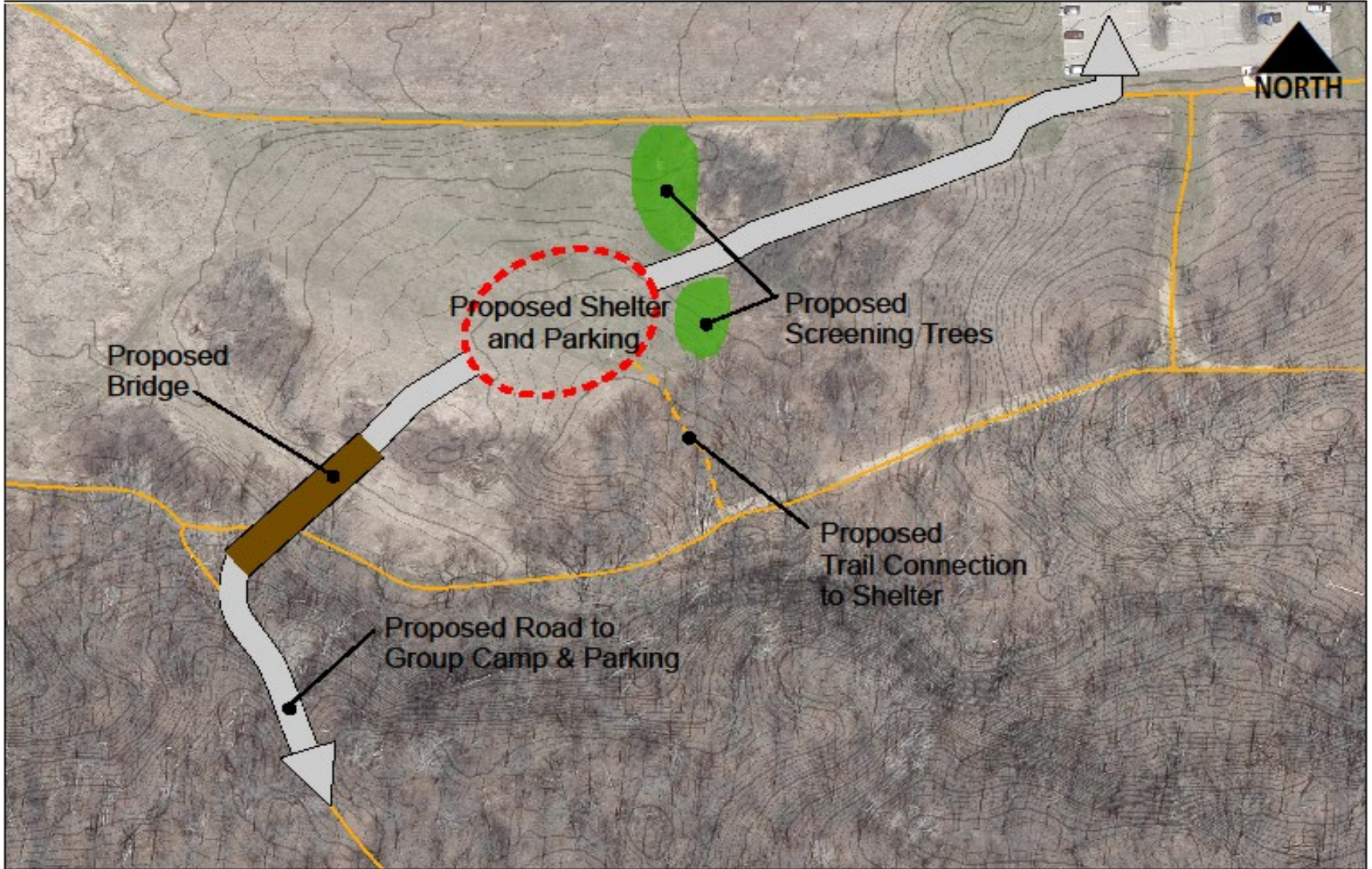
Group Camp and Parking Concept



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Picnic Shelter Concept



Draft Plan Recommendations

DOG PARK

- Interior fence.
- Swimming beach.
- Future relocated entrance and parking facilities.
- Vault toilet.



Draft Plan Recommendations

TRAILS

- Realigned Ice Age Trail in southern half of the park.
- Additional 1 mile of groomed cross country ski trails.
- Additional 2 miles of hiking/snow shoe trails.
- Bicycle trail connection between Indian Trail Road and existing parking lot/restroom facilities.



Draft Plan Recommendations

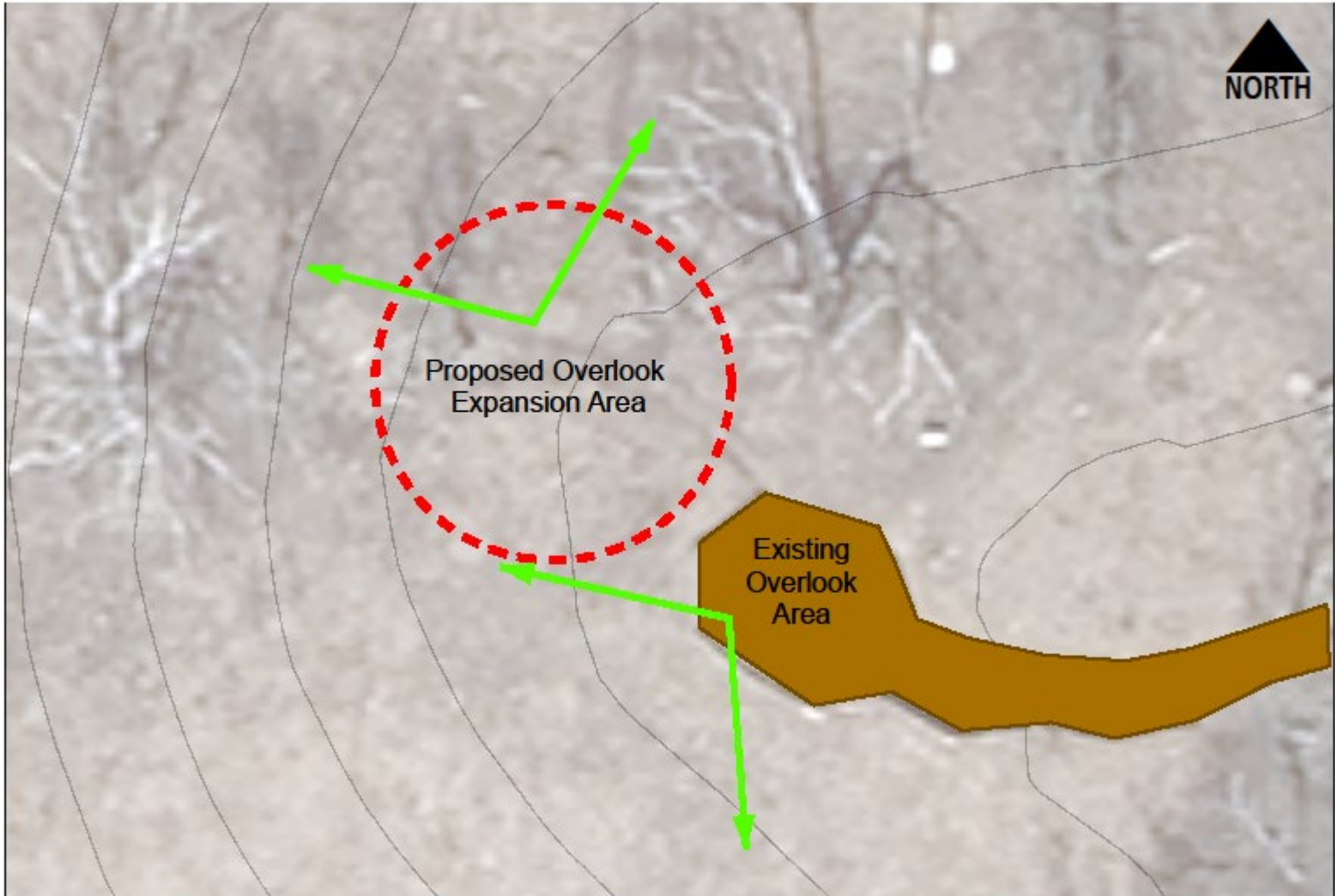
PARK AMENITIES

- New reservable timber frame shelter with restroom.
- Scenic overlook restoration/expansion.





Overlook Expansion Concept



Draft Plan Recommendations

SIGNAGE

- Updated interpretive signage related to the natural and cultural history of the park.
- Updated wayfinding signage.
- Investigate renaming the property in coordination with the Ho-Chunk Nation.



Draft Plan Recommendations

LAND and LAKE MANAGEMENT

- Continued oak savanna prairie restoration.
- Prairie strip/pollinator buffers at southern agriculture areas.
- Maintain and enhance large block forest habitat.
- Continued lake invasive species management.
- Dredge lake to provide long term sustainable aquatic ecosystems.



Draft Indian Lake County Park Halfway Prairie Master Plan

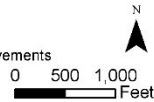


Map 7-3 Proposed Master Plan Indian Lake County Park & Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area Draft Master Plan

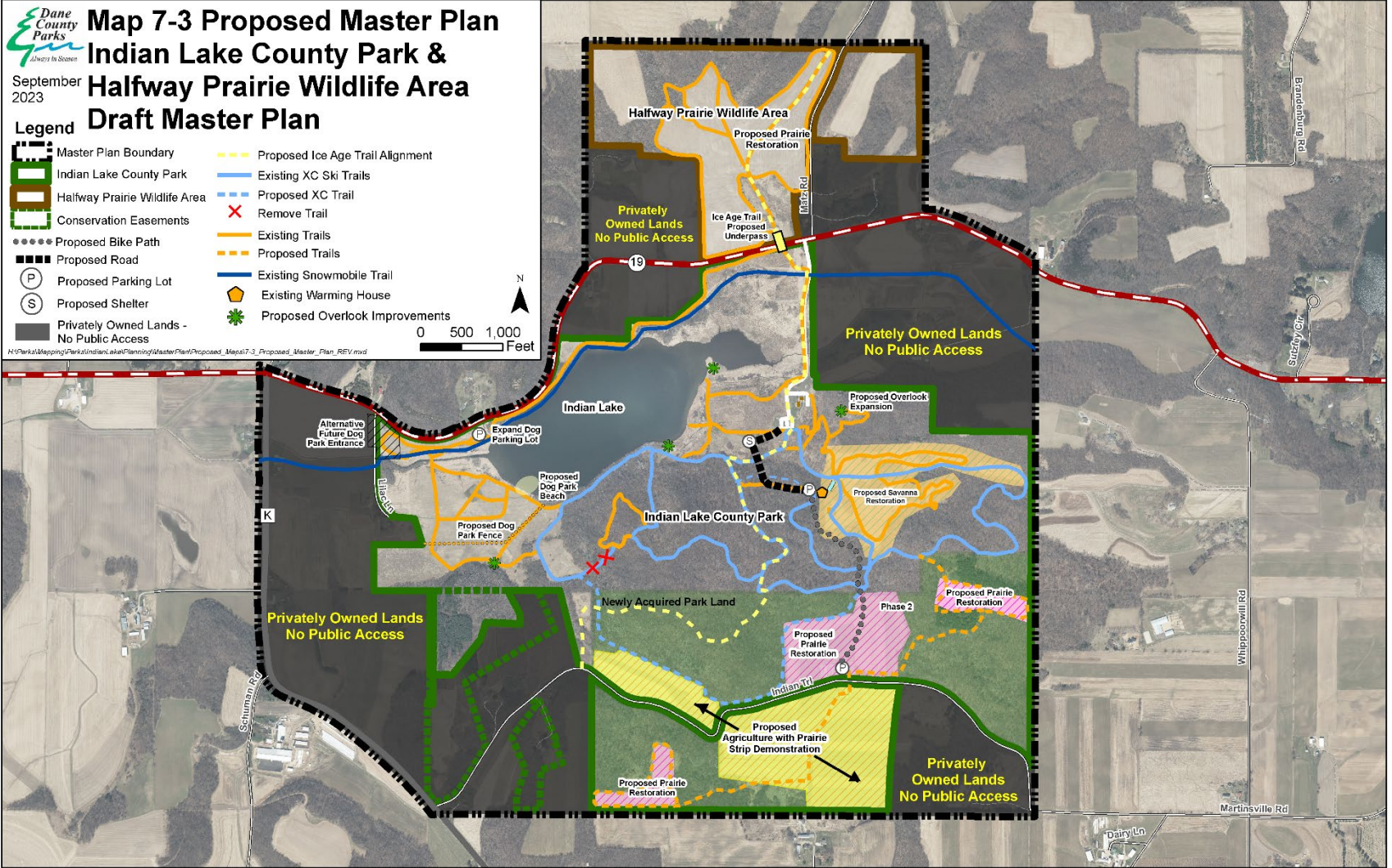
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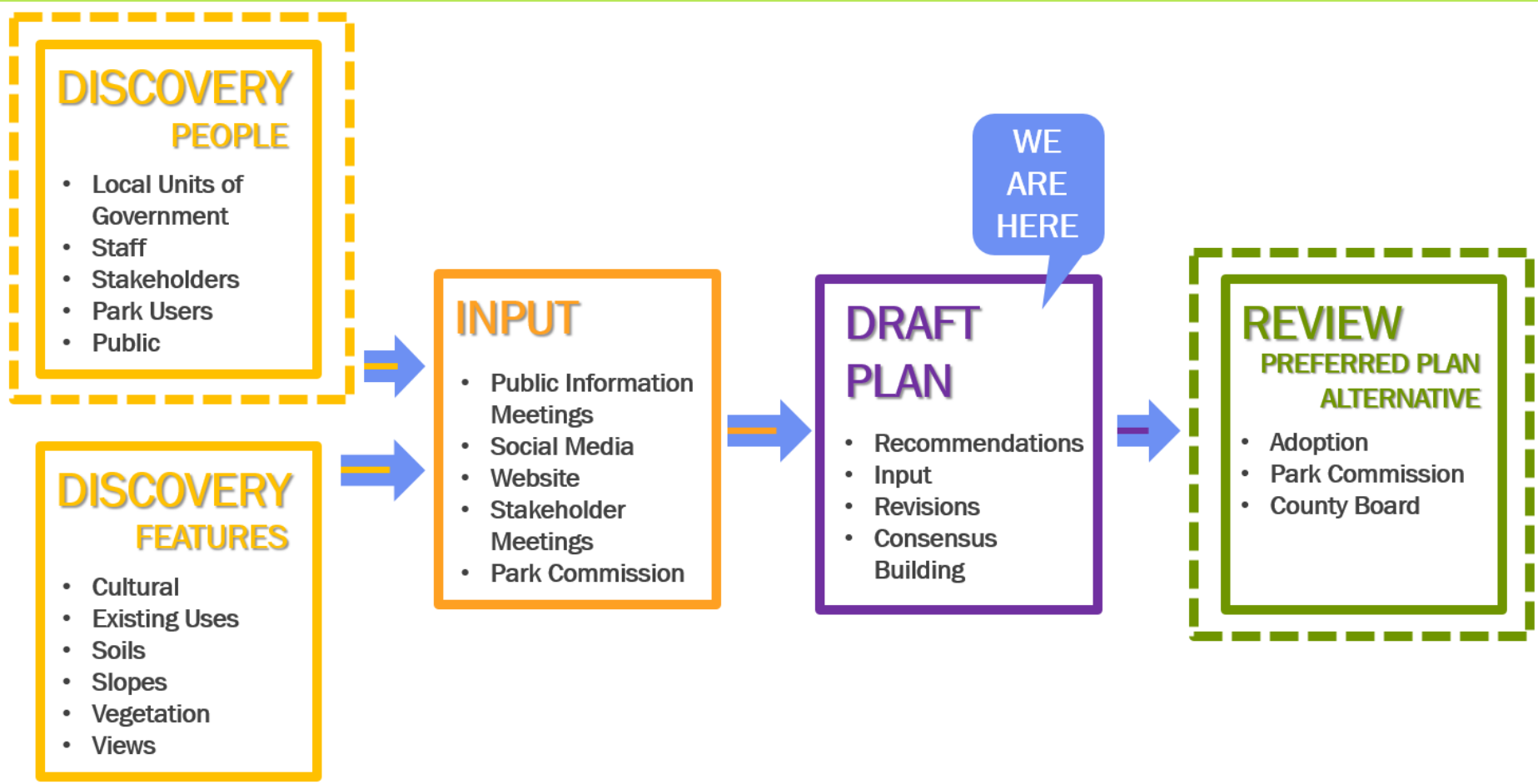
- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Master Plan Boundary | Proposed Ice Age Trail Alignment |
| Indian Lake County Park | Existing XC Ski Trails |
| Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area | Proposed XC Trail |
| Conservation Easements | Remove Trail |
| Proposed Bike Path | Existing Trails |
| Proposed Road | Proposed Trails |
| Proposed Parking Lot | Existing Snowmobile Trail |
| Proposed Shelter | Existing Warming House |
| Privately Owned Lands - No Public Access | Proposed Overlook Improvements |



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Timeline



Next Steps

- Continue Gathering Public, Stakeholder Input On the Draft Plan
- Submit Comments by November 1st , 2023
- Present Preferred Alternative to Dane County Park Commission December 2023?
- Dane County Board Adoption Early 2024?

Public Input

Please...

- In-person Attendees, Respect your Allotted Time Limit (5 Minutes)
- Zoom Attendees, Type your Questions or Comments into the Q/A Chat – We will Read them Aloud.
- Do Not Interrupt or Interject Comments on Other Comments
- Do Not Laugh at Someone's Idea
- Refrain from Talking while Others are Speaking

We'll be here as long as we can afterward for additional questions.

For More Information Contact:

Chris James, Park Planning Manager

Dane County Parks

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Madison, WI 53719

608-224-3763

james@countyofdane.com

Web:

<https://www.danecountyparks.com/propertyplan/detail/Indian-Lake-Halfway-Prairie>