



Iron County, Wisconsin

Outdoor Recreation Plan
2010-2015

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**SECTION 1
COUNTY OFFICIALS**

IRON COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

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Joseph R. Vairus – Forest Administrator

Tara Stuhr.....Office Manager/Trail Coordinator
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 Gary GlonekForester
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 Charles Zinsmaster Assistant Forest Administrator

IRON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

District	Name	Town
1	Donald Richards*	Hurley
2	Donald Erspamer	Hurley
3	Jack Prospero	Hurley
4	Ronald Kern *	Hurley
5	William Thomas*	Gile
6	Mitch Koski	Montreal
7	Steve Smith	Kimball
8	Tom Innes	Gurney
9	John Wiita	Iron Belt
10	Dennis DeRosso	Oma
11	James Lambert	Mercer
12	Opal Roberts	Mercer
13	Thomas Thompson, Jr*	Mercer
14	James Kichak*	Mercer
15	Gerald Luke	Sherman

Chairman of the County Board – Dennis DeRosso

Vice Chairman of the County Board – Donald Richards

Iron County Clerk – Michael J. Saari

*Forestry and Parks Committee Member

SECTION 2 STATEMENT OF NEED

Based on considerable public input, the Iron County Forestry Department determined a need to update its outdoor recreational plan. With the public stating a desire to improve and maintain existing resources and develop new opportunities, the Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan is being updated to include years 2010-2015.

An important element of this plan is the enhancement of the many nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities that Iron County has to offer. The County enjoys numerous resource-based assets, including rivers and streams, forests, waterfalls, trails and parks. Whether active or passive recreational activities, Iron County has much to offer. The Chambers of Commerce along with the Iron County Development Zone continue to promote Iron County as a recreational tourist destination.

The major focus of this plan is the assessment and improvement of recreational opportunities throughout the County. A large number of people have expressed interest in the development of walking trails and other outdoor fitness recreational activities. The major goal of this plan is to develop ideas as to the future of recreation in Iron County to meet the needs of all residents.

In addition, this plan supports the regular maintenance and upgrading of all existing park facilities in the Towns of Iron County.

SECTION 3 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Iron County prepared a number of goals and objectives to address the outdoor recreational needs of the residents. The goals and objectives are intended to assist the County Board and other community leaders in implementing actions deemed important and in the best interest of the County. It is imperative that the goals and objectives in this plan are implemented.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Inventory the location, facilities, and condition of all existing outdoor recreation areas.
2. Review desired improvements to existing facilities through a public participation process.
3. Identify new outdoor recreation improvement projects through a public participation process.
4. Ensure that all existing and new recreational facilities are adequately maintained.

SECTION 4 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING REGION

A. SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

LOCATION

Iron County is located in northern Wisconsin and borders the south shore of Lake Superior and the Upper Peninsula of the State of Michigan. Iron County borders the counties of Ashland, Price, and Vilas in Wisconsin, and Gogebic County in Michigan. Iron County is 757.3 square miles in size, had a population of 6,861 according to the 2000 U.S. Census, and includes ten towns and two cities. The City of Hurley is the county seat.



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Since the creation of Iron County from Ashland and Oneida Counties in 1893, the county's population has been quite erratic. The population increased the most in the ten years from 1910 to 1920, gaining 1,955 people, and sustained its greatest loss from 1940 to 1950, losing 1,335 residents. In the last ten years, the county has gained 708 people. Table 1.1 shows in more detail the historical population of Iron County over the last 100 years.

Iron County: Population 1900-2000

Year	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Pop.	6,616	8,306	10,261	9,933	10,049	8,714	7,830	6,533	6,730	6,153	6,861

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Table 1.2 shows population projections for Iron County from 2010 to 2030. These projections are based on past and current population trends and are intended to be a baseline guide for county decision makers. The projections indicated that Iron County will experience a slow decline in population over the next 25 years. Although Iron County is “projected” to decline in population over the next 25 years, many feel that the county will actually increase in population like it has over the last decade.

Table 1.2 shows population projections for Iron County

Year	Iron County
2010	6,919
2020	7,002
2030	6,995
Absolute Change 2000-2030	-134

Source: WDWD, Iron County Profile 2008

ETHNICITY & ANCESTRAL COMPOSITION

An ethnic group consists of those who conceive themselves as being alike. Most often times, these groups share a common ancestry, history or culture. This may include geographic origins, family patterns, language, values, cultural norms, religion, music and employment patterns. Table 1.3 details the ethnicity of Iron County residents. Ethnic backgrounds for Germans and Italians are strongest in Iron County.

Table 1.3: Iron County Ethnicity

Austrian	47	Irish	374
Croatian	24	Italian	1,082
Czech	57	Norwegian	195
Danish	29	Polish	538
Dutch	35	Russian	22
English	273	Scottish	36
Finnish	880	Slovak	34
French	189	Swedish	212
French Canadian	102	U.S.A.	119
German	1,213	Other Ancestries	1,375
Hungarian	25	Total Ancestries	
		Reported	6,861

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT

According to Census 2000 figures, approximately 2,871 Iron County residents were employed at that time in either the county or elsewhere. The Educational, Health, and Social Services industry sector employed the most county residents at 494. Manufacturing employed the second largest number of residents at 460. Table 1.4 displays employment of Iron County residents by percentage of industry sector.

Table 1.4: Employment by Industry

Public Administration	5.20%
Other Services except public administration	4.40%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	3.60%
Construction	10.90%
Manufacturing	16%
Wholesale trade	3.40%
Retail Trade	11.60%
Transportation, warehousing, and utilities	4.60%

Information	1.70%
Finance, insurance, real estate	3.80%
Professional, scientific, management, and administrative	4.10%
Education, health, and social services	17.20%
Arts entertainment, and recreation	13.50%

Source: Census 2000 (SF 3)

A community's labor force is that portion of the population that is employed or actively seeking employment. Table 1.5 lists Iron County labor force statistics for 1997-2007 on an average annual basis. It should be noted that Iron County employment fluctuates and changes on a seasonal basis. According to Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development data, Iron County's labor force numbers have fluctuated up and down over the last ten years. Also, unemployment rates in 2003 and 2004 climbed to the highest level since 1993.

Table 1.5: Iron County Labor Force Data

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Labor Force	3,295	3,216	3,201	3,304	3,383	3,342	3,347	3,291	3,200	3,196	3,082
Employed	3,035	2,963	3,015	3,085	3,148	3,257	3,032	2,992	2,930	2,934	2,832
Unemployed	260	253	186	219	235	285	315	299	270	262	250
Unemp. Rate	7.9%	7.9%	5.8%	6.6%	7.0%	8.5%	9.4%	9.1%	8.4%	8.2%	8.1%

Source: DWD Iron County Workforce Profile 2008

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE & AGE DISTRIBUTION

In the years between 1990 and 2000, Iron County saw a decrease in children 5 years old and younger (-11.6%), persons age 25 to 34 (-22.1%), and persons age 65 to 74 (-4.6%). Of the age groups showing an increase for this time period, the group that grew most rapidly was persons aged 45 to 54 (+52.5%). Table 1.6 illustrates the new gain/loss and percentage change by age group.

Table 1.6: Iron County Demographic Change, 1990-2000

Age Category	Absolute Change: 1990-2000	Percent Change: 1990-2000
Under 5	-36	-11.6%
5 to 14	+8	+1.0%
15 to 24	+62	+10.1%
25 to 34	-176	-22.1%
35 to 44	+277	+34.7%
45 to 54	+336	+52.5%
55 to 64	+146	+20.4%
65 to 74	-39	-4.6%
75 to 84	+70	+13.9%
84 and over	+60	+39.2%

Selected age categories		
All inhabitants 14 and under	-28	-2.6%
All inhabitants 24 and under	+34	+2.0%
All inhabitants 65 and over	+91	+6.1%
All inhabitants 75 and over	+130	+19.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (SF 1)

The recreational needs of all Iron County age groups will be represented in this plan. Generally speaking, older residents are interested in more passive recreation, such as enjoying scenic views through the provision of seating and benches that allows for the enjoyment of nature trails and paths. Younger people tend to enjoy more active recreation, such as fishing and fitness trails and motorized recreation. Families often enjoy a broad range of activities such as camping and picnicking as well as motorized recreation.

ECONOMY

In addition to having one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, Iron County also has some of the lowest incomes in the state. As shown in Table 1.7, annual average wages earned by workers in Iron County in 2007 fell short of the statewide average for all industry sectors. Workers employed in the industry sectors of Manufacturing, Financial Activities, and Professional & Business Services received less than 60 percent of the State of Wisconsin average for workers in those same fields. Workers in the Construction industry sector earned the highest annual wage followed by the Public Administration industry.

Table 1.7: 2007 Annual Average Wages by Industry Division

	Iron County Average Annual Wage	State Average Annual Wage	Percent of State Average
All Industries	\$24,416	\$38,070	64.10%
Construction	\$34,679	\$47,489	73.0%
Education & Health Services	\$29,465	\$39,606	74.4%
Financial Activities	\$24,940	\$50,749	49.1%
Information	ND	\$48,483	NA
Leisure & Hospitality	\$10,230	\$13,589	75.3%
Manufacturing	\$26,645	\$47,106	56.6%
Natural Resources	\$24,990	\$29,235	85.5%
Other Service	ND	\$22,073	NA
Professional & Business Services	\$21,742	\$44,328	49.0%
Public Administration	\$30,382	\$39,879	76.2%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$22,392	\$32,762	68.3%

Sources: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development-Iron Co Workforce Profile 2008. ND = Non Disclosable—data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards

B. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

TOPOGRAPHY

Iron County is divided by the Penokee-Gogebic Range, two parallel ridges running southwesterly from Hurley, that separate the Lake Superior lowlands to the north from the Northern Highland Peneplain to the south. This geologic feature is part of a large regional landscape that extends eastward to the Keweenaw Peninsula in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Ore deposits were mined extensively in these highlands from the 1880's through the 1960's.

The northern third of Iron County slopes generally downward from the Penokee Range northward to Lake Superior, forming a large coastal plain. Numerous rivers and streams bisect this area. To the south of the range, the northern rim of the Northern Highland Peneplain begins its gradual rise. This region contains undulating gravely pitted outwash containing many lakes and wetlands.

The highest elevation found in Iron County is approximately 1,877 feet above sea level at the former Pleasant Lake Lookout in Section 34, T44N-R1E in the Town of Knight. The lowest elevation of 603 feet above sea level is found at the Lake Superior coast in the Town of Saxon. Information related to topography was obtained through the United States Geological Survey.

WATER RESOURCES

Water resources are an important component of the natural landscape. These dynamic resources provide many benefits to both human and wildlife. Lakes, rivers, streams, waterfalls, swamps and floodplains are part of a natural cycle and provide many outdoor recreational opportunities. They not only provide direct recreational opportunities, such as fishing and boating, but they also enhance wildlife habitat that offer wildlife hiking, viewing and hunting activities.

CLIMATE

The climate of Iron County is separated into two general classifications: a *lake modified continental* climate along the Lake Superior shoreline area and a continental climate throughout the rest of the county. The continental climate is generally characterized by hot summers and cold winters. This pattern is modified along the Lake Superior coast by the cold lake waters that serve to moderate summertime temperatures and increase wintertime temperatures. Average temperatures in Iron County range from 13° F in January to 67° F in July. Average temperatures along the lakeshore can be as much as 10-15° cooler in the summer and slightly warmer during the winter months.

Average annual precipitation varies from about 36 inches in the Penokee highlands of north central Iron County, to 32 inches along the lake and in the far southern part of the county. Average annual snowfall ranges from 160 inches at Hurley to 80 inches in the southwestern part of the county. Lake enhanced winter storms produce generally higher snowfalls across northern Iron County, particularly in areas of high elevation.

Insert Geography of Iron County

SECTION 5 OUTDOOR RECREATION INVENTORY

NATURAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

There are many recreational facilities owned and managed by the towns, county and state that are available to residents and visitors of Iron County. In addition to the maintained recreational facilities, county forests and bodies of water also provide countless recreational opportunities. In addition to the campgrounds, the public is allowed to set up and camp on the County Forest for up to two weeks in the same location.

1. County Parks

Lake of the Falls – A 40-acre county park and campground (32 units) located at the beginning of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, 6 miles west of Mercer on County Road FF. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fire rings, drinking water, restrooms, swimming area, boat ramp, fishing, pavilion, electrical hookups, and a caretaker.

Schomberg Park – Schomberg Park is a 160-acre county park and campground (14 units) located off Highway 51 in the Town of Oma along Layman’s Creek. Facilities include a restrooms and showers, pavilion and picnic area, tables, fire rings, electrical hookups, drinking water, dump station, ATV washstation, ATV trail access. Schomberg Park also has a 1.7 mile snowshoe trail loop with parking available in the winter.

Weber Lake – This county park and campground (11 units) is located west of Hurley off County Road E in the Town of Anderson. The park consists of ten acres with a picnic area, tables, fire rings, drinking water, pavilion, restrooms, changing rooms, boat ramp, fishing, swimming area and electrical hookups.

Saxon Harbor – This county park and campground (43 units) is at Lake Superior, north of U.S. 2 off Highway 122 and County Road A. The Harbor includes 91 slips for boats up to 40 feet long, 12 transient moorings, three boat launches, parking for 50 trailers, gas for sale, boat septic system pump out, water, boat-lift, restroom and shower facilities and dumpstation. Picnic tables, a pavilion, playground, fire rings, electrical hookup and swimming area are available. ATV trail access. In 2009 a bridge across Oronto Creek and 5 walk-in campsites were built. Each campsites contains a tent pad, fire ring and picnic table.

Potato River Falls – Located two miles west of Highway 169 in the town of Gurney, rustic campsites (7 units) and fire rings are available at Potato River Falls. Hiking/biking trails, restrooms, picnic tables and a pavilion surround the waterfalls and trout fishing possibilities.

2. City Parks

Al Riccelli Park – This five-acre community park is located at 805 Maple Street in the City of Hurley. Facilities include playground equipment, picnic tables, basketball court, pavilion and new restrooms constructed in 2009. Little League fields are located adjacent to Riccelli Park, which includes bleacher seating and a concession stand.

Veteran's Memorial Field – Located on Fifth Avenue in Hurley, Veteran's Memorial Field offers opportunity for various forms of recreation. A football field with two large sets of bleachers offers a location for home football games in the fall accompanied by concession stands, restrooms and locker room facilities. Also at Veteran's Memorial Field, there are newly sealed basketball and tennis courts for public use.

Cary Road Park – This park is located off Highway 77 in the City of Hurley. Facilities include a softball field, volleyball court, horseshoe pits, bocce ball court, playground equipment, combination concession stand/restrooms and a paved walking trail.

Albert C. Morzenti Sr. Memorial Park – This 10-acre park is located on Highway 77 in the City of Montreal. The west fork of the Montreal River flows along this park near the picnic area. Facilities include picnic tables, grills, swing set, trash containers, and a historical marker commemorating the site of the world's deepest iron mine. Montreal baseball fields are adjacent to this park.

Slugger Baron Park – Located on Ohio Avenue in the City of Montreal, this park consists of picnic tables and new playground equipment.

Gile Park on Gile Flowage – Gile Park is a park owned by the City of Montreal, located west of Hurley on Hwy 77, left into Gile to Flowage. The park has a picnic area, tables, fireplaces, drinking water, pavilion, restrooms, changing rooms, slide and swings, swimming, boat launching ramps and fishing.

Dan Young Park—Located in the City of Montreal. The park includes a local softball field, swing sets and other play equipment.

3. Town Parks

Carrow Community Park – This town park is located on County Road J on Grand Portage Lake in Mercer. Facilities include a picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, and restrooms, swimming area, new playground equipment, bike racks, ball field and paved walking track.

Upson Community Park – This town park is maintained by the Town of Anderson, and is located on the Potato River west of Upson. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, restrooms, overnight camping, electrical hookups, waterfall and trout fishing.

Kimball Park – The Kimball Town Park west of Hurley and south on Park Road on the Montreal River offers a beautiful view of Kimball Falls. Other facilities include a picnic area, tables, fire rings, pavilion, restrooms, overnight camping, trout and walleye fishing, walking trails, and kayak options.

Kimball Town Baseball Field – The Town of Kimball owns a baseball field situated on US Highway 2. This facility includes fences and an outhouse. This field has been neglected over the years and is in need of maintenance before any future use.

Oma Town Park – This town park located on County Road G is found on Pine Lake. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, restrooms, swimming and a playground.

4. State Campgrounds

Sandy Beach Campgrounds – This state campground is located on Powell Marsh Road in the northeastern corner of the Town of Sherman. Facilities include rustic campsites, toilets, tables, picnic area, fire rings, drinking water, swimming and a boat launch.

Turtle Flambeau Flowage Islands – This state camping facility offers remote campsites on islands accessible by water only. Facilities include steel fire rings, some picnic tables and open-air pit toilets. Camping is year round at no charge except at group sites. Maps are available at the Mercer Ranger Station and the Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce or go to: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/turtleflambeau> . Boat launches in several locations are available. The Turtle Flambeau Flowage offers excellent fishing, canoeing and kayaking opportunities.

Six group sites on Big Island are available by reservation only. There is a fee for these sites. Reservations can be made by contacting Reserve America or the WDNR website.

5. Private Campgrounds

Frontier Bar Campgrounds – Camping options can be found just behind the Frontier Bar in Cedar off Highway 2. Facilities include fireplaces, drinking water, restrooms, picnic area and tables. Sewer, electrical, water, Laundromat and pull thru sites are available to RVs. Easy access to ATV trail 2.

Loon Lagoon Campground – Camping on Grand Portage Lake can be found at 2580 Margaret St., Mercer.

6. Waterfalls

Some of the most spectacular waterfalls in Wisconsin, in both height and surrounding scenery are found in Iron County. Visitors and residents can enjoy the waterfalls as natural now as they were when they were discovered. Most of Iron County's many waterfalls are located off the beaten path and provide excellent hiking and snowshoeing opportunities. Iron County waterfalls include the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Superior Falls – 90 feet | Montreal River (Lake Superior/Saxon Area) |
| • Potato River Falls – 90 feet | Potato River (Gurney Area) |
| • Peterson Falls – 35 feet | East Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area) |
| • Upson Falls – 18 feet | Potato River (Upson Area) |
| • Gile Falls – 15 feet | West Branch Montreal River (Gile Area) |
| • Shay's Dam Falls – 15 feet | Turtle River (Mercer Area) |
| • Kimball Falls – 10 feet | West Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area) |
| • Lake of the Falls – 10 feet | Turtle River (Flambeau Flowage Area) |
| • Rock Cut Falls – 15 feet | West Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area) |
| • Spring Camp Falls – 20 feet | East Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area) |
| • Wren Falls – 15 feet | Tyler Forks River (Gurney Area) |
| • Foster Falls – 25 feet | Potato River (Gurney Area) |
| • Rice Lake Falls – 10 feet | Turtle River (Mercer Area) |
| • Rouse Falls – 15 feet | Rouse Creek (Upson Area) |

- **Little Balsam Falls** – 8 feet Tyler Forks River (Upson Area)
- **Saxon Falls** – 78 feet Montreal River (Lake Superior/Saxon Area)

7. Non-Motorized Trails

Non-motorized recreational facilities in Iron County include scenic hiking and walking trails, off-road biking, cross country ski trails, and canoe routes. What follows is a listing and descriptions of current and proposed non-motorized trails in Iron County.

MECCA Trail – The MECCA (Mercer Cross-Country Association) Trail system is located in the Town of Mercer and consists of hiking, biking and cross-country ski trails. These trails also serve as hunter walking trails in the fall. MECCA grooms 20 km for skiing through the woods and around the Little Turtle Flowage. Most trails are on Iron County Forest and State lands. The club operates a log chalet at the main trailhead 2 miles off Hwy 51 on the south side of Mercer, via Beachway Street.

Flambeau Trail – The Flambeau Trail was the key transportation route for Native Americans long before European exploration. Later, the trail hosted voyagers, fur traders and settlers during their journeys throughout the region. The Flambeau Trail crossed the Continental Divide linking the Lake Superior and Mississippi watersheds. Today, the Flambeau Trail is used as an auto tour highlighting historic sites along the trail.

North Country Trail – The North Country National Scenic Trail is a premier footpath that stretches more than 4,000 miles to link communities and wilderness areas across seven northern states. Wisconsin has the smallest distance of any of the seven states the North Country Trail crosses, and the second smallest amount of trail developed to date. The trail crosses from Michigan on the US-2 Bridge from Ironwood into Hurley. A few miles west of Hurley, the Uller Trail, a 7-mile trail on Iron County Forest land is also used.

Montreal Nordic Ski Trails – This trail is located in and around the City of Montreal and includes just over nine miles of trails. Eight different sections, each with a very different class (easiest, more difficult, most difficult), meander in and around the city. Interpretive signing describes the mining activity in the area. Penoque Ranger volunteers groom trails.

Uller Trail – The Uller Trail is part of the Nordic Ski Trails system and is located along the Penoque Range from Pence and Iron Belt to Weber Lake. The trail’s terrain is hilly and remote and is approximately 19 miles in length. Penoque Ranger volunteers groom the trail.

Pines and Mines Mountain Bike Trail System – This trail system offers 300 miles of marked and mapped mountain biking opportunities in the abundant public lands of Iron County and the nearby Ottawa National Forest.

Hidden Rivers Nature Trail – This interpretive trail is located at Fisherman’s Landing on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage in the Town of Mercer. The trail is two miles long and includes signage describing the history and resources of the Flowage.

Deadhorse Trail – This hunter walking trail is located off of Popko Circle West in the Town of Mercer. The trail includes interpretive and informational signs about grouse habitat management and a deer/hare exclosure. It is managed in cooperation with the Ruffed Grouse Society.

Downtown Mercer Biking/Walking Trail Project – A paved hiking/biking trail has been constructed along County Road J from Margaret Street to Scheels Road.

The Town of Mercer continues working toward the development of pedestrian trails along portions of existing road right-of-ways and adjacent to a segment of abandoned railroad right-of-ways. The proposed trails would provide areas of the community with a safe, walking and biking route to the central business district and would enhance tourism by connecting to neighboring communities such as Manitowish Waters and Winchester.

Schomberg Park Snowshoe Trail – Two loops totaling 1.7 miles of snowshoe trail has been developed and marked in cooperation between the Iron County Forestry Department and the Iron County Economic Development Committee. Future plans include interpretive signing by the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department and expansion of the trail. This trail may also be used as a hiking trail in the summer.

Hunter Walking Trails – The Iron County Forestry Department has received a grant from the Ruffed Grouse Society to map and print hunting trails throughout Iron County on the County Forest. This project began in 2009 and continues on.

8. Motorized Trails

ATV Trails – Iron County boasts Wisconsin’s largest ATV system starting in the Hurley area, with more than 250 miles of trails and routes to take riders deep into the heart of Iron County. Along the routes, motorists will find a variety of pit stops offering food, beverages, gas, lodging and scenic outlooks. For maps on Iron County’s ATV trails, contact the Iron County Development Zone Council or the Hurley and Mercer Chamber of Commerce.

The Iron County Forestry Department along with the Iron County ATV Association maintains 118 miles of ATV trails throughout the County. The Forestry Department also contracts with the White Thunder Riders and Mercer SnoGoers to maintain 165 miles of winter ATV trails.

Snowmobile Trails – Over 450 miles of well-groomed, uncrowded snowmobile trails traverse Iron County. Unmatched beauty, with a unique microclimate, along with the most reliable snow in the Midwest guarantees Iron County snow even when other areas are without hence Governor Doyle’s designation of Iron County as the Snow Capital of Wisconsin in 2009.

Iron County’s snowmobile trails connect and incorporate many of the county’s historic communities, transportation corridors, mining and lumbering sites, as well as plenty of forests and lakes. As with the ATV trail system, varieties of establishments offer food, beverages, gas and lodging along the journey. Experienced riders may visit scenic outlooks.

The Iron County Forestry Department contracts with the White Thunder Riders and the Mercer SnoGoers to maintain 303 miles of snowmobile trails throughout the County.

9. Boat Landings

There is a number of boat landings found within Iron County. Many are county and state owned, offering access to spectacular lakes as large as Lake Superior and as small as Lake Obadash.

The number of landings located at each lake is listed. Depending on the lake, landings may be paved or rustic and vary from powerboat use to canoe.

Table 1.8: Iron County Boat Landings

Saxon Harbor – 3 & lift	Fox Lake – 1	Tamarack Lake – 1
Pine Lake – 1	Wilson Lake – 1	Du Page Lake – 1
Shay’s Dam – 1	Trude Lake – 1	Turtle Flambeau – 7
Lake of the Falls – 1	Pine Lake – 1	Owl Lake -1
Weber Lake – 1	Lake Evelyn – 1	Bearskull Lake – 1
Moose Lake – 1	Bass Lake – 1	Randall Lake – 1
Fisher Lake – 1	Long Lake – 1	Sandy Beach Lake – 1
Upton Lake – 2	North Bass Lake – 1	Lake Obadash – 1
Twin Lakes – 1	Cedar Lake – 1	Little Moose – 1
Shirley Lake – 1	Mercer Lake – 1	Plunkett – 1
Saxon Falls – 1	Deer Lake – 1	Mud Lake – 1
Gile Flowage – 4	Brandis Lake – 1	Lake One – 1
Island Lake – 1	Echo Lake – 1	Spider Lake – 2
Deer Tail Lake – 1	McDermott Lake – 1	Saskatoon Lake – 1
Grand Portage Lake – 1	Lake Six – 1	Beaver Lake – 1
Lake O’Brien – 1	Pike Lake – 1	Hewitt Lake – 1
Little Turtle Flowage – 1	One Man Lake -1	

SECTION 6 OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To ensure that the needs of the public are served by this plan, a significant amount of time has been expressed gaining public input into the plan development. Gaining public input and support is a critical element to assessing the needs, development and implementation of this outdoor recreation plan.

A. PUBLIC INPUT ASSESSMENT

On March 17, 2009, a letter was mailed to county, city and town supervisors (see appendix). Information requested in this letter was used to develop the following portion of the Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan. A news release was also submitted and published on March 18 and 19 to the Ironwood Daily Globe and Iron County Miner requesting information from the public regarding their personal interest in the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation in Iron County (see appendix). Wants and needs acquired from the public are represented in the following section.

B. PUBLIC INPUT

1. Non-Motorized Trails

The number one commented area of recreation was non-motorized trails. Many folks sited a lack of non-motorized opportunities while others felt there is a need for more promotion on the non-

motorized opportunities such as waterfalls, cross country ski trails, biking and hiking trails, snowshoeing and kayaking.

Throughout the county, residents are very vocal when it comes to walking trails for both summer strolls and winter snowshoeing. Every community would benefit from a 2-mile walking trail that is safe and easily accessible with parking facilities. Winter and summer walking trails with signs and maps would be ideal. The Iron County communities continue to search for funding sources to help develop such trails.

Iron County and its communities continue to struggle with maintenance of non-motorized trails due to a lack of funding from outside sources and tight governmental budgets. This challenge appears to continue throughout this plans period.

Specific projects which are in the planning or construction phases include the following:

Mercer – A bike/hike path from Manitowish Waters to Mercer along old and new Hwy 51. The Manitowish Waters Regional Bike Trail Committee continues to plan connections from Mercer, Manitowish Waters, Sandy Beach Campground, Lac du Flambeau and Sherman into the system. The Town of Mercer has a liaison on the committee. Grants will be sought from a variety of sources for the funding of projects. The Iron County Forestry and Parks Committee has supported this effort.

A trail system linking Mercer and Hurley would also be beneficial and will also be researched possibly using County Trunks J, H, G and Highway 51 as a guide route.

Hurley K-12 Loop - The 3 mile (5km) loop that includes 10th Avenue, Range View Drive and County Trunk D; passing the Hurley K-12 School is heavily used by fitness walkers and others during the snow-free months. Portions of the route have minimal shoulder area and traffic on County Trunk D and Range View Drive can be heavy and reckless at times. A dedicated walking trail/sidewalk has been requested and discussed for the past few years. Construction of the trail/sidewalk would improve safety and encourage present and future walkers to exercise in the outdoors. Grant sources are being sought out to construct such a trail, including Safe Routes to School.

Schomberg Park Snowshoe Trail - In 2009 the Iron County Forestry Department along with the Economic Development and Land and Water Conservation Departments constructed a 1.7 mile snowshoe trail on the Schomberg Park property. During 2010, the Land and Water Conservation Department will add interpretative signage describing the different habitats, plant and animal species and timber types.

If the trail continues to be well used, other spurs and loops will be added. Volunteers and grants will be sought to maintain and develop additional trails.

North Country Trail – The Iron County Forestry Department continues to work with the North Country Trail Association to complete and certify the trail across Iron County from Gogebic County, Michigan through to Ashland County. The NCTA has expressed interest in constructing foot bridges over the Potato River and over Tyler Forks at Wren Falls as well as developing a trailhead and parking area at Wren Falls. The group would also like to see vehicle damage near Wren Falls repaired and improvement to the tent sites with firerings and picnic tables added.

The completed segments of the North Country Trail should be added to the Recreation Map and other public trail maps.

The NCTA is able to provide financial assistance along with the National Park Service and volunteers.

MECCA Ski Trails – The MECCA Ski Trail system continues to be maintained by the volunteers of the MECCA Ski Club. As a majority of the trail is located on County Forest, the Iron County Forestry Department will continue to seek out funding sources for maintenance and improvements on the trail system. Due to tight foreseen County budgets, funding for such efforts will need to continue from volunteers and grants.

Uller Ski Trails – The Uller Ski Trail system continues to be maintained by very few volunteers of the Penokee Rangers Ski Club. More volunteers need to be sought in order for the trail to be continually maintained. Grooming equipment is beginning to deteriorate and needs to be replaced as well as several bridges along the trail.

As a majority of the trail is located on County Forest, the Iron County Forestry Department will continue to seek out funding sources for maintenance and improvements. Due to tight foreseen budgets, funding for such efforts will need to continue from volunteers and grants.

Other general comments received regarding non-motorized trails include:

Development of horseback riding trails and camping areas with appropriate signage. This may be possible through volunteers and grants.

A bike lane should be considered on future highway projects along Highways 2, 51 and 77. Grants may be sought with cooperation from the WDOT.

Bike and walking trails from the Hurley K-12 School to the Hurley residential would benefit students and families as well as a trail along Highway 51 from 2nd Avenue to the Farmer's Market. Volunteers, grants and easements would be required for such projects.

Construction of a mountain biking system on the Iron County Forest. This may be possible through grants and volunteers along with cooperation from the Iron County Forestry Department.

Map a water trail beginning at Lake of the Falls.

Continue improving trail signage on existing trail systems. This will be done with the cooperation between the supporting volunteers, landowners and Iron County.

2. Motorized Trails

The majority of comments regarding motorized trails came from those concerned with the environmental impacts caused by motorized recreation, particularly ATVs. The Iron County Forestry Department realizes this concern and continues to strive to maintain a sustainable ATV trail system. Soil impacts which effect water quality has become a great concern over the past decade and will continue to be a challenge in the future. Alternative ATV trails will be explored whenever wetland issues arise as well as alternative trail construction methods, such as the use of boardwalks.

In all types of trail construction and maintenance, the Forestry Department is committed to minimizing the impacts to wetlands and water quality. This will be accomplished through a proactive approach by working with wetland specialists during both the planning and construction phases.

The funding for the maintenance of the ATV and snowmobile trail system comes from grants received from the WDNR. The Iron County Forestry Department applies annually for the funding and manages the grants. The County Trail Coordinator works with the White Thunder Riders, Mercer SnoGoers, Iron County ATV Association and department staff to ensure proper maintenance of the ATV and snowmobile trails systems.

The Trail Coordinator also works with ICF Department staff and the clubs to identify trail and bridge rehabilitation, relocation and construction needs which are beyond the scope of trail maintenance. Additional grants may be applied for annually to cover the expenses of such projects.

An ongoing project within the ICF Department is continuing to work on improving the trail signage on the existing trail system. This is funded through ATV and snowmobile maintenance grants.

ATV Trails – The Iron County Forestry Department contracts with the Iron County ATV Association along with the White Thunder Riders and Mercer SnoGoers on maintenance of the ATV trail system. The 3 clubs as well as the Forestry Department maintain a total of 118 miles of spring, summer and fall ATV trail miles. Winter ATV trail miles total 165.

Iron County's trail system is also made up of hundreds of miles of routes. Many of the routes are on scarcely used gravel town and forest roads and have become important segments of the trail system. The local governments have received great pressure from constituents over the past few years to designate all or many of the town roads as routes in order for home and camp owners to legally access ATV trails. This has been done in the majority of the towns in the county. It is not the intention for these routes to be a part of the trails system, but must be signed properly, even so.

A major issue facing the ATV trail system is the off trail use of ATVs and 4x4s. The Forestry Department will continue to work with the WDNR in identifying areas of continuous prohibited use. When an area is identified, it will be determined what type of action is needed to stop the unauthorized use. Berms, gates, fences and signs may be used. If the area has been severely damaged, restoration may also be required. Depending on the situation, funding for this may come from Iron County, WDNR trail grants, or a combination of both. The Iron County Forestry Department prefers to spend the money *on* the trail system where all users can benefit.

Due to budget cuts on both the State and County levels, Iron County does not see the needed recreation law enforcement for the amount of users. For the sustainability of the sport, trail users need to be educated on the impacts of off trail use in order to understand the importance of staying on the trail. This can be accomplished through the ATV safety classes, posters, signs, maps and presentations by various departments and clubs.

Several comments received support the development of new trails particularly in the Mercer area. USGS soils data indicates the Town of Mercer consists of approximately 43% wetland soil

types. For this reason, additional ATV trails are unlikely in the Mercer area without enormous construction costs.

The spread of invasive species through ATV use is a relatively new issue. The Iron County Forestry Department along with the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department has taken a proactive approach by installing an ATV wash station at Schomberg Park. It is intended for ATV riders to use the wash before riding on Iron County trails as well as before they leave Iron County to help prevent the spread of terrestrial invasives. Education materials will also be provided.

Side by side ATVs, or UTVs, is also a coming issue. There is currently a bill in the legislature which will start a pilot program for UTV use. Each county will have the option to participate. The ICF Committee has expressed interest in allowing UTVs. Once this pilot program is underway, the WDNR should be working with the Wisconsin ATV Association to find a sponsoring representative to right a bill to permanently allow UTVs and also to begin registration system for these machines to help support the maintenance of the ATV trail system.

Dirt bikes are currently not allowed on the ATV trail system. There is not a statewide registration system for off road bikes which makes it impossible to obtain funding for maintenance of trails for dirt bike use. Dirt bikes cause a different rutting track than ATVs. Repair for any damage caused by dirt bikes would not be covered under the ATV maintenance grants. In the event the State were to pass a law with a registration system for dirt bikes which would support maintenance of the current trail system, the County will consider allowing use.

Snowmobile Trails – The Iron County Forestry Department contracts with the White Thunder Riders and Mercer SnoGoers for trail maintenance of 304 miles of snowmobile trails in Iron County. The White Thunder Riders and Mercer SnoGoers each maintain 133 miles of snowmobile trail and the ICF Department maintains 38 miles.

There are some miles of routes in Iron County. These are generally connectors or provide access to businesses. Many unplowed town and forest roads are groomed trails during the winter. Towns will occasionally approach the ICF Department with concerns over a route. The ICF Department has been able to construct trails and reroute some routes onto new trails. The ICF Department realizes the concerns of the towns as the towns realize the importance of snowmobile access to their business. Compromises will continue to be made.

The biggest challenge the snowmobile trail system in Iron County faces is easement revocation by a landowner. When a landowner wishes to close the trail on his property a reroute must be located. This is often a difficult task especially when the trail is both a snowmobile and ATV trail. Erosion, dust and off trail use are the reasons often sited for trail closures or lack of permission to construct a new trail. It is the goal of the ICF Department to reroute whenever possible onto public land. This is not always possible so private land use agreements must be sought. Grant money can be obtained for the construction of reroutes. Applications are submitted once per year.

In November, 2009 the Iron County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance which allows off trail snowmobiling on Iron County Forest land on logging roads and trails which are not gated, signed or bermed. Off trail riding, or boondocking, has become a growing segment among snowmobile enthusiasts. This activity will be watched closely to determine the effects on the economy and the existing trail system.

In December, 2009, Governor Doyle declared Iron County the Snow Capital of Wisconsin. It is hoped this declaration will help Iron County receive special recognition in grant applications and issues which seem to be segregated to Iron County due to the large snow fall amounts and long winter season.

3. Parks

Several comments were received regarding specific parks improvements that the public would like to see as well as the construction of facilities to allow physical fitness opportunities year round.

Due to the budget crunch seen on the local, county and statewide level, governments have only been able to budget minimal, if any, money for maintenance of existing facilities. New facilities will likely only be constructed if grants and other funding sources are obtained.

Education on invasive species is a comment received regarding all parks in Iron County with boating recreation. The Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department has hired an Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator to help educate the public on the problems invasives create and steps which can be taken to help prevent the spread. The LWCD is currently working on several projects both on site and in the classroom to provide education.

Saxon Harbor – Currently, the ICF Department contracts with the Saxon Harbor Boating Club for caretaking of Saxon Harbor. During 2010, the Iron County Board of Supervisors is going to conduct research and take steps into leasing out Saxon Harbor. The lessee would be responsible for the operations of Saxon Harbor while still maintaining a public facility.

The Saxon Harbor Boating Club offered several improvements and additions which would benefit Saxon Harbor and possibly Iron County by increasing revenue.

SHBC members would like to see an upgrade to the north basin including sidewalks, utility pedestals and floating docks, improved access to the beach area, new pavilion construction including a toilet/shower facility and kitchen area, improvement to the west launch ramp and dock. The electrical service in the lower campground often faults and needs to be upgraded and extend water service to the south end of the lower campground. The gazebo on the east side of the harbor needs remodeling. A storage space for cleaning supplies and hot water and urinal in men's restroom on the east side would be an added convenience.

Other comments received from the public regarding Saxon Harbor include the development of hiking trails, remote tent sites (5 remote sites added in 2009), nature trail and nature programs.

Lake of the Falls – Comments received regarding Lake of the Falls include the construction of a flush toilet and shower facility, restoration of shore caused by erosion, installation of interpretative signage and construction of a boat wash facility to help prevent the spread of invasive species.

In 2008 electrical pedestals were added to the campsites in side three. During 2009 this side of the campground was highly occupied. The caretaker often hears that Lake of the Falls needs a flush toilet and shower facility. The construction of such a facility would be a huge asset to the Lake of the Falls campground but would likely have to be funded by Iron County. Such a

facility along with some minor electrical upgrades in side one, would expect to fill the campground to capacity most of the summer.

Carow Park – Carow Park has undergone some renovations in the past few years and the residents of Mercer would like to see a few more projects completed. Comments include to remove or replace the steps from the park down to the lake and to remodel the Lion’s Pavilion and add electrical, water and sewer service to it.

Carow Park is a Mercer Town Park.

Sandy Beach State Campground – As the State undergoes budget cuts, State campgrounds may be in jeopardy of being closed. In the event that Sandy Beach Campground is in jeopardy of closing, Iron County, along with the Town of Sherman, would like the opportunity to work with the WDNR to determine a way to keep the campground open to the public.

City of Montreal Parks – The City of Montreal would like to seek grant funding to make improvements to the park and playground equipment at both the Albert C. Morzenti Memorial Park and the Dan Young Park.

Town of Sherman – The Town of Sherman would like to establish a park with picnic tables and playground equipment near the new town hall in Springstead.

Kimball Town Park – The Town of Kimball would like to secure some grant funding to do some major repair work on the road bridge at the Kimball Town Park. A bridge inspection will be done in 2010 to determine the extent of repairs needed.

4. Miscellaneous Public Comments

Other projects county residents and recreationalists would like to see include:

- Development of a skate park.
- Construction of a pneumatic dome at Cary Park for indoor winter recreation.
- Construction of an indoor pool at Hurley K-12.
- Develop a lifetime sports and recreation curriculum that focuses on active indoor and outdoor recreation at both schools. A similar curriculum made available to the general public.
- Keep lake experiences “wild” by limiting access for big boats and zoning ordinances for personal watercraft.
- Education with landowners and municipalities on maintaining water quality and aquatic habitats including invasive species, run off of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, etc. *Note: this is an ongoing mission of the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department.*
- Maintain reasonable water levels in the flowages.
- Improve the balance between motorized recreation and silent sports.

APPENDIX

Insert Iron County Outdoor Recreation Survey (2 letters)

Iron County ATV Map

Iron County Snowmobile Map