

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

PLAN CONTEXT

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) is charged by law with the duty of preparing and adopting a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region, which includes Washington County. The regional plan, which is periodically updated, consists of a number of major elements, including land use, transportation, park and open space, and water quality management elements.

The regional land use plan sets forth the fundamental concepts which are intended to guide the development of the Region. The regional land use plan, the most recent version of which was adopted by the Commission in 1992, is documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 40, [A Regional Land Use Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2010](#). The regional plan was adopted by the Washington County Board of Supervisors on December 8, 1992. The three most important recommendations contained in the regional land use plan are: 1) the preservation of primary environmental corridors in essentially natural, open uses, 2) the maintenance of prime agricultural lands in long-term agricultural uses, and 3) encouragement of a more compact pattern of urban development, one that can be efficiently served by such essential public facilities and services as centralized sanitary sewerage, water supply, and mass transit. These three recommendations provide the basic framework within which other regional plan components, including park and open space plans, are developed.

The first park and open space plan for Washington County was included as part of the first regional park and open space plan,¹ which was adopted by the Regional Planning Commission on December 1, 1977. That plan identified existing and probable future park and open space needs within the Region and recommended a park system consisting of large resource-oriented parks and smaller nonresource-oriented urban parks, together with attendant recreational facilities. The regional park and open space plan also recommended the development of an approximately 440-mile network of hiking and bicycling trails within natural-resource corridors of regional significance, including such corridors along the Lake Michigan shoreline, through the Kettle Moraine, and along the riverine areas of the major watercourses of the Region. The regional park and open space

plan incorporates the regional land use plan's recommendations concerning primary environmental corridors and prime agricultural land preservation.

In 1984, the Washington County Park and Planning Commission requested that the Regional Planning Commission assist the County in refining and updating the regional park and open space plan as it applied to Washington County. The resulting plan is documented in the first edition of this report, SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 136, [A Park and Open Space Plan for Washington County](#), March 1989. The plan, which has a design year of 2000, was adopted by the Washington County Board of Supervisors on December 12, 1989, and by the Regional Planning Commission on March 7, 1990.

The 1989 County park and open space plan calls for the provision of two new major parks, for a total of eight major parks within the County. One park was to be acquired and developed by Washington County in the Town of Hartford. This park, known as the Washington County Golf Course and Family Park, is scheduled to open in 1997. The second new major park recommended in the plan, which was to be acquired and developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, has not yet been acquired.

The 1989 County park and open space plan also calls for the development by the Department of carry-in boating access facilities at Lucas Lake and Smith Lake and development by the County of a carry-in boat-access site to the Milwaukee River. Since adoption of the plan, the County has acquired Goeden Park in the Town of Trenton, which provides the recommended river access. Public boating access has also been provided to Smith Lake but has not yet been provided to Lucas Lake.

The County park and open space plan adopted in 1989 further calls for the development of the Ice Age trail by the Department of Natural Resources and the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation and the development by the County of a trail along the Milwaukee River. Portions of both trails have been developed since adoption of the plan, although existing portions of the Milwaukee River trail have all been developed by the City of West Bend.

¹*Documented in SEWRPC Planning Report No. 27, [A Regional Park and Open Space Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin: 2000](#).*

COUNTY REQUEST

On November 16, 1994, Washington County requested that the Regional Planning Commission assist the County in the preparation of a new park and open space plan. The new plan is to be based upon updated information related to land use, population levels and distribution, anticipated growth and development, natural resources, and park and open space acquisition and development activities within the County. The new plan is further intended to maintain County eligibility to apply for, and receive, Federal and State aids in partial support of the acquisition and development of park and open space sites and facilities. The new plan is documented in this report. The plan, which is based upon the recommended development pattern set forth in the year 2010 regional land use plan, is designed to extend the recommendations of the existing Washington County park and open space plan to the design year 2010.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The new County park and open space plan was prepared under the guidance of an Advisory Committee established by Washington County. The committee consists of representatives of governmental agencies and local governments within the County. A complete membership list of the Advisory Committee is provided on the inside front cover of this report. Following approval by the Advisory Committee, the plan was adopted by the County Park and Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors.

REPORT FORMAT

The findings and recommendations of the requested park and open space planning effort are set forth in this report. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II of this report presents information about the County pertinent to park and open space planning, including information on the existing resident population, land use pattern, and natural resource base of the County. Chapter III provides information on existing park sites and facilities and open space lands within the County. Chapter IV describes the results of the public opinion survey conducted as part of the planning effort. Chapter V presents the park and open space preservation, acquisition, and development objectives, principles, and supporting standards which served as the basis for the development of the park and open space plan for the County and also presents an analysis of park and open space needs in the County. Chapter VI sets forth the recommended park and open space plan. Chapter VII identifies the actions required to carry out the recommended plan. A summary of the plan is presented in Chapter VIII.