



**Lower Wisconsin  
State Riverway Board**

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TO: Ann Freiwald, DNR Riverway Planner  
Matt Seguin, DNR Riverway Property Manager

FROM: Mark E. Cupp, Executive Director  
Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board

RE: DNR Draft Riverway Master Plan comments from LWSRB

DATE: April 1, 2016

The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board (LWSRB) has reviewed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Draft Master Plan for the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. The LWSRB Executive Committee met on March 31, 2016, and approved the recommendations of board members and staff in regard to the following comments on the draft plan.

The DNR Master Plan for the Riverway should include a greater explanation of the role of the LWSRB in administration of scenic protection guidelines in the Riverway. The relationship between DNR and the LWSRB should be explained in a more robust manner. The fact that DNR staff must obtain permits from the LWSRB prior to engaging in certain activities on public lands in the Riverway should be detailed. Contact information for the LWSRB should be provided in the document.

The LWSRB opposes the proposed closure to vehicles and equestrians of the High Bank Road west of Muscoda and the Wightman Road/High Bank Road near Blue River Barrens and Fish Trap Flowage. The sand road has been used by generations to view wildlife and nature in general as well as to access fishing and duck hunting areas. Post-Riverway, the equestrian trail has attracted a local following as well as visitors from outside the immediate area. The enjoyment of the road by elderly and others with physical limitations who are unable to walk long distances, as well as the general public, should supersede the expediency of closure to eliminate problems perceived by DNR staff. Access by equestrian users should be maintained. The document indicates the Muscoda to Blue River 6.25 mile trail receives "little use" and "does not provide a quality riding experience." For many equestrian enthusiasts in the Muscoda area, the trail represents an important opportunity to access public lands and to enjoy the segment from Muscoda to Blue River. The snowmobile trail use in this area should continue without interruption. The commitment to maintaining the trail and working with local snowmobile clubs is noted in the plan. The plan should not unilaterally state that there will be no groomed cross country ski trails in the Riverway. Conditions could change in the future whereby a funding source or partnership is developed to have groomed trails.

The document should include greater emphasis and detail on backwater sloughs, not just for development, but also for protection and restoration. The RAMSAR designation for wetlands also is not mentioned in the document. In general, the aquatic resources receive much less attention than that of terrestrial resources. Use of buffer areas in the vicinity of backwater sloughs and land use study of adjoining properties should be a key component of the master plan. (See research of Dave Marshall and others)



## **DNR DRAFT RIVERWAY MASTER PLAN COMMENTS FROM LWSRB/APRIL 1, 2016**

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The LWSRB suggested that recreational use management include opportunities for reducing user conflicts at boat landings. Development of new access sites may assist in achieving this goal but there is no direct reference to reducing user conflicts at existing landings. The LWSRB recognizes that some of the popular landings are not under DNR management but the department should provide leadership and commit to working with communities to lessen user conflicts.

The document discusses development of an auto trail in the LWSR interpretative/education plan but fails to note the Lower Wisconsin River Road is a Department of Transportation (DOT) approved Wisconsin Scenic Byway. The Lower Wisconsin River Road encompasses STH 60 from the Interstate near Lodi to the Great River Road at Prairie du Chien. The potential exists for inclusion of roads on the south side of the river as well.

The document mentions the concept of a "Thru-Hiking Trail" in the Riverway and indicates the department's commitment to cooperation with communities and others to link trail segments. However, the document stops short of committing to a leadership role in establishment of a Thru-Hiking Trail. The department should identify segments on state lands where a trail could be readily established and further identify the potential linkages to other community based trails. Obstacles, such as "wet soil" or "steep terrain," should be specifically identified and alternatives routes delineated. (The variation of the word "Thru" was questioned as the proper use or spelling of through.)

Development of new access sites or modifications of existing access sites on the main stem of the river are regulated by s. 30.44(4), Stats., and require a permit from the LWSRB. Efforts should be made to minimize visual impacts when viewed from the river, including lighting. Dark sky compliant lighting and avoidance of dusk to dawn lighting is preferred. The proposal for intensive development of the DNR landing at Muscoda should be reconsidered in terms of short term development vs. long term actions. Creation of a day use area and improved launch pad is supported. The additional of a drinking water source and picnic shelter also has merit. Portable toilets may be a more reasonable alternative to a facility with showers and flush toilets until user pressures escalate to the point of warranting such a facility. Development of access sites on lands not visible from the main channel of the river are treated under a "general" permit issued by the LWSRB.

In general, the LWSRB supports development of day use areas along the river and backwaters when done in an aesthetically sensitive manner. The proposed Port Andrew day use area may require additional archeological review. A habitation site, locally known as Tippesaukee, is partially located on the property to the east and a bird mound is found on the west border of the former Wanek property. The erodible high bank has long been a site for collectors of stone artifacts.

The LWSRB previously stated support for development of primitive campsites for use during high water events that render sand bar camping impossible. The two sites identified are on the lower segment of the river where use is the least. Additional opportunities for sites upstream in heavier use areas should be sought.

The LWSRB finds the proposed development of a shooting range on state owned lands to be unnecessary. There are numerous public and private shooting ranges in the area. Noise from development of a shooting range near the river and the adverse effect on a "wild" river experience is a concern.

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Standards for timber harvests on wooded lands under DNR management in the Riverway should reference aesthetic protection objectives in addition to typical management objectives. The unique scenic protection regulations in the Riverway require special consideration when developing harvest plans. Clear cuts should be avoided in the Bluff Zone and River Edge Zone and should be used sparingly in the Riverview Zone. Appropriate LWSRB-issued permits are required before harvesting in the Riverway.

The Riverway boundary should be thoroughly reviewed and appropriate adjustments made to incorporate areas that provide scenic values, public recreation objectives or habitat protection/development objectives. Tower Hill State Park should be incorporated into the Riverway boundary as portions of Wyalusing State Park currently are. A commitment to the use of scenic easements (without the requirement of public access) should be made to Riverway landowners.

The LWSRB is pleased that a number of the board's recommendations and suggestions were incorporated in the Draft Master Plan for the Riverway. A listing of "Errata & Omissions" is attached. A major issue that arose during review of the draft plan is the figure assigned to "number of acres within the Riverway boundary." The 95,000 acre figure is used on occasion which is a "never been seen before" figure to many who have a longstanding involvement with the project. Questions to DNR staff about this number have thus far been unanswered.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at (608) 739-3188 or by e-mail at [mark.cupp@wisconsin.gov](mailto:mark.cupp@wisconsin.gov). As always, I will be happy to assist in whatever manner possible.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.



## **ERRATA & OMISSIONS**

- 1) Page 1 references 95,000 acres
- 2) Page 7 Goal 4 references scenic protection goals but fails to mention LWSRB
- 3) Page 13 refers to five archeological/historical sites in IV.D but doesn't mention 5 sites
- 4) Page 15 wipeout should be wipe out
- 5) Page 17 refers to "High ground space..."; elevated land or dry land for parking is better
- 6) Pages 22-23 refers to Slough and then Slu and Slu is used elsewhere also
- 7) Page 22 and other places refer to Helen Lake which should be Helena Lake or Goofy Slough
- 8) Page 30 bottom of column one, last paragraph contains cumbersome and confusing language
- 9) Page 44 cites Madison and then "urban area", the population for the greater Madison area is closer to 600,000, it may be a matter of semantics but should be cleaned up
- 10) Page 46 references Black Hawk "war" and should be War
- 11) Page 53 header needs a space; 2/3 way down column 1 is a dangling bullet point
- 12) Page 56 the order of properties appears haphazard
- 13) Page 62 Area 9 Locator map is barely legible and not very useful; GPS coordinates should be considered in conjunction with locator maps
- 14) Page 108 should include "low impact" in front of mowing
- 15) Page 178 Public Communications Plan should include an annual report made to the LWSRB at a regular monthly meeting
- 16) Page 182 Table 3.1 is confusing in regard to who manages what and who are "others"
- 17) Page 189 Tables 4.1 and 4.2 seem out of place
- 18) Page 191 should note the proposed costs are in 2016 dollars
- 19) Page 192 Placement of Table 4.5
- 20) Page 196 indicates cooperation with the LWSRB and other partners is beyond the scope of the Master Plan, this section should be reworded so that it doesn't sound like the department isn't interested in cooperation with the LWSRB and other entities
- 21) Page 199 "Other" should be identified in Table A.1
- 22) Page 201 First paragraph is out of place