

TOWN OF VERONA  
OPEN SPACE & PARKS PLAN  
2009-2014

*Prepared by the  
Town of Verona Open Space & Parks Commission*

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# INTRODUCTION

This Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Plan 2009-2014 is an update to the original 2001-2005 Open Space and Parks Plan. This Plan identifies the natural resources and features that the Town of Verona seeks to preserve for the benefit of its citizens, present and future. This Plan also establishes goals and advisory guidelines to help the Town Board make land use decisions to achieve that end.

The recommendations put forth in this Plan should be re-examined annually and completely reviewed at the end of the Planning period in order to determine how well the town has achieved its goals. Future Planning efforts should build on the recommendations made in this Plan.

## **PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THIS PLAN**

This plan has two core purposes:

- 1) Facilitate the acquisition of land and development restrictions from willing sellers
- 2) Foster new and innovative partnerships with other units of government and community organization to support land acquisition and park and trail development projects

Areas designated for preservation or recreation development on the Town's Open Space and Parks Map are intended to indicate which properties and trail routes the Town is most interested in protecting in cooperation with willing property owners. These designations will not be used by the Town to prevent development as permitted by the Town of Verona Comprehensive Plan, and they should not be considered by other jurisdictions with review authority on land use or subdivision applications

## **HISTORY OF THE OPEN SPACE AND PARKS COMMISSION**

The Open Space and Parks Commission was formed in 2000 through the vision of Town Chair Steve Sheets and under the leadership of Bruce Allison, the first chairman of the commission. The first OSPC Plan was approved by the Town Board in 2001. It outlined the unique natural resources of the Verona area and provided a vision for years to come.

During the OSPC's first five years of existence the commission was able to make a difference in many areas of our community. The Commission's initial accomplishment was to facilitate the Town's first dedicated public open space. The OSPC with the leadership of commission member Kathleen McCormick, the Friends of Goose Lake, Dane County Parks, and the Urban Open Space Foundation acquired and deeded to the Town of Verona a small parcel of land as permanent open space in the Goose Lake neighborhood. As a result of this achievement the Capital Community Citizens Organization presented the OSPC with their Orchid Award.

As part of the OSPC's goal of education, OSPC partnered with Dane County Parks, The Natural Heritage Land Trust, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, and Capital Water Trails to help establish the Upper Sugar River Resource Area. The goal is to create awareness of our unique natural resource areas, which are currently under pressure as the neighboring municipalities encroach into the Verona area.

The OSPC was also instrumental in collaboration with Dane County Parks in establishing the Scheidegger County Forest. This 80 acre wooded parcel was identified in the OSPC plan, then acquired & designated a County Forest by Dane County Parks in 2002. All of this was made possible through the generosity of Walter Scheidegger.

The OSPC (especially commission member Bill Keen) has also worked with Capital Water Trails to establish the Upper Sugar River Water Trail. This water trail can now be accessed from a number of road crossings and is navigable to the Town of Verona's southern border and beyond.

The Open Space and Parks Commission is comprised of five members who are appointed by the Town Chair for two-year terms. They meet once a month to work on the priorities and goals of the Plan through building partnerships with other organizations and providing information and recommendations to the Plan Commission and Town Board, as requested.

## **NEEDS ANALYSIS**

The Town of Verona is very fortunate to have within its boundaries a wealth of unique natural resources. The Town is also currently experiencing rapid development and change that will directly impact these natural resources and the Town's environmental quality. Preserving valuable natural resources such as open space or park lands has been a priority for the Town's citizens and is part of Verona's reputation as a high-quality living environment. For this reason, the OSPC uses a resource-based approach to analyze and prioritize the Town's needs regarding open space and parks. As such, the OSPC focuses on identifying specific areas and features appropriate for open space and park land, based upon physical and natural resources.

## **PLANNING PROCESS**

The OSPC and its members meet regularly with individuals and organizations to gather information relevant to its mission and this Plan. The following individuals and their respective organizations have contributed key information that has been incorporated into this Plan:

- Chris James, Dane County Parks Planner
- Dave Walker, Parks Director, City of Verona

The OSPC also referred to the following documents in preparing this Plan:

- Results of the Town of Verona Land Use Survey
- *Parks and Open Space Plan for Dane County, Wisconsin (2006-2011)*
- *2006 City of Verona Park and Open Space Plan*
- *2005-2010 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

A core value of this plan is the forming and strengthening of working relationships with the Dane County Parks Department, the City of Verona, various non-profit organizations such as the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT), Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA), and other organizations. The OSPC believes that leveraging existing and ongoing activities is the best way to maximize the potential benefit for the Town of Verona.

# OSPC MISSION

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Commission is:

***To identify, protect and preserve natural resources in the Town of Verona for the purpose of ecological health, recreation and enjoyment by present and future generations.***

We will accomplish this mission by:

- Careful planning, education, acquisition (where feasible with the support of alternative funding sources), development and stewardship
- Forming partnerships with Town residents and land owners, as well as non-profit organizations and government agencies
- Following the guidelines identified in the *Town's Comprehensive Land Use Plan* and this Plan.
- Providing environmental education programs and volunteer opportunities to Verona area residents of all ages.

# TOWN OF VERONA OPEN SPACE AND PARKS GOALS

## GOALS

Goals in this Plan are intended to be both broad and visionary. They are not time specific but serve to guide the direction of the Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Commission in carrying out its mission. The six primary open space and parks goals are to:

1. Provide sufficient open space, park land, and recreational opportunities to meet the growing demand of Verona area residents without adversely affecting existing natural resources.
2. Preserve for posterity the characteristics and diversity of the natural, cultural and historical resources of the Town of Verona.
3. Preserve large tracts of natural and agricultural rural landscapes at urban fringe areas that will provide regional resource protection and recreation benefits.
4. Protect lakes, rivers and streams, including shorelines, wetlands, high infiltration areas and associated vegetative buffers to maintain high water quality, manage water quantity, and sustain water-related recreation throughout the Township.
5. Leverage the efforts of other entities to maximize the benefits for Town residents, including Dane County, the City of Verona and other neighboring communities, and private or non-profit organizations.
6. Recognize and respect the landowners who have been the stewards of the land, in many cases for generations. Identify shared concerns and work toward mutual goals.

## GENERAL PRIORITIES & GUIDELINES

This Plan identifies priorities and guidelines to provide a framework for accomplishing the Town's open space and parks goals. These priorities and guidelines were adapted from the priorities and policies set forth in the *Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan 2006-2011*, and are organized according to the categories in that document.

"Priorities" identify desired end results that should be prioritized whenever a preservation opportunity or land development proposal arises. It should be noted that conservation easement and land acquisition, development and management decisions are often based on opportunity, partnerships and willing sellers rather than priority; hence, prime opportunities, if presented should be given timely consideration even though they may not be included in this section.

"Guidelines" are statements that provide guidance for future Town Planning, development, management, and land acquisition decision-making processes.

This plan incorporates two maps – the Town of Verona Open Space and Parks Map, and a version of the Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan Map showing what the County has planned within the Town of Verona. The Town of Verona map is the product of planning efforts by the Town of Verona and features areas and routes that the Town would most like to see preserved, in cooperation with willing landowners. The Dane County map is the product of County-wide planning and is provided with this plan for reference purposes only.

## RECREATION PARKS AND TRAILS

### *Priorities*

1. Establish a Verona-wide bicycle-pedestrian trail system that connects neighboring communities and subdivisions with other public parks and regional trail systems. This supports a Dane County priority on off-road regional bicycle-pedestrian trail projects, especially trails close to major

population centers or through areas targeted for development that are adjacent to urban areas, which can serve both commuter and recreation needs.

2. Complete the Ice Age National Scenic Trail through Verona in collaboration with Dane County Parks, the City of Verona, the National Park Service, the WDNR, and Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation.
3. Consider expansion of public land and public-access conservation easements to meet growing demands for trails and recreation.

#### ***Guidelines***

1. Give preference to the creation and preservation of recreation resources that serve multiple uses and users, including both Town and non-Town residents.
2. Locate new recreation parks close to, but isolated from, large population centers on lands that provide for year round multiple recreation uses with diverse natural resources. Ideally, natural features such as rugged topography, water or wetlands will provide separation from urban areas.
3. Seek partnerships with other recreation groups, including private, non-profit organizations that have a regional user base; and give preference to projects that include such partnerships
4. Seek alternative sources of revenue to fund trail acquisition and increasing costs for operation, maintenance and development.

## **CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

#### ***Priorities***

1. Identify and preserve those sites listed by the Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory.
2. Encourage private owners and organizations to develop interpretive and educational signage to increase public awareness and appreciation of cultural and historical sites; and provide Town assistance in this effort as staff, time, and resources allow

#### ***Guidelines***

1. Encourage friends organizations, non-profit and special interest groups to take responsibility for all costs and fund raising related to the protection and restoration of historic sites or structures.
- 2.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS**

#### ***Priorities***

1. Preserve lands adjacent to urban areas that improve water and wetland quality and quantity.
2. Acquire (by funding through partnerships) additional natural resource area acreage that increases overall size and connectivity of existing natural resource areas.
- 3.
4. Continue expanding existing and creating new natural resource areas that provide a variety of regional functions, including nature-based recreation uses, water quality improvement, trail connectivity, and habitat improvement.
5. Continue and increase restoration efforts to the extent possible on woodlands, wetlands, prairie, and savanna ecosystems.

#### ***Guidelines***

1. If and when development is proposed in a Natural Resource Area consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan, work with the property owner to ensure that open space preserved within the development serves the goals of this plan, especially protection of sensitive features, contiguity

with other existing or planned open space, and trail connectivity. Isolated pockets of open space are not consistent with this plan and should be discouraged.

2. Focus on projects that involve and foster multiple partnerships.
3. Communicate project area resource protection priorities to partnering agencies and non profit groups to provide a common vision and work Plan.
4. Work with partnering agencies and groups toward creation of larger landscape-scale parks and natural resource areas.
5. Plan and implement greenway connections that enhance non-motorized public access from population centers to existing public lands and regional trails.
6. Plan, implement and partner on projects that provide environmentally sensitive access to Dane County lakes, streams and rivers, including water-based trails and shore fishing.
7. Acquire buffer lands to Town water and wetland areas to reduce flooding and enhance water quality.
8. Allow low-impact, nature-based recreation development and use of natural resource areas that include overlook areas for natural and scenic views.
9. Where advantageous, promote alternative land lease, rental or sustainable resource management practices that could generate revenues for future operation, maintenance, and development of natural resource areas.
10. Promote stabilizing streambanks, shorelines and other areas of erosion through coordinated planning efforts on publicly-owned lands, working jointly with adjacent property owners as necessary, to ensure permanent stabilization.
11. Consider both working and non-working farm lands as a complementary component of natural resource areas.
12. Consider the net impact of new public lands on the Town's tax base, including the loss of tax revenues from acquired parcels and any increase in value and revenues that may result for surrounding parcels.

## **FORESTS**

### ***Priorities***

Support the Dane County creation of Forest Management Plans (including sustainable timber harvest) for County forests and woodlots that are compatible with other forest use objectives.

1. Support Dane County efforts to educate park users about sustainable forest management practices, including sustainable timber harvest, when compatible with other forest use objectives.
2. Increase the acreage of forests and woodlots in the Town. (Work with partner organizations as necessary)
3. Work with partner organizations to support the Dane County utilization of proceeds of sustainable and environmentally compatible timber harvests for future forest land acquisition, management and facility development.
4. Assist in the control of invasive vegetative species by coordinating volunteer efforts within the Town.

### ***Guidelines***

1. Support multiple low-impact recreation uses of County forests and woodlots compatible with forest objectives including hiking, picnicking, cross country skiing, and hunting.
2. Work with the County to identify local businesses that can provide revenue-generating sustainable timber management practices and collection of firewood.

3. Help the County establish partnerships with schools, “Friends” groups, and non-profit conservation organizations to assist with management, maintenance and monitoring of forest lands.

## **LAND ACQUISITION**

### *Priorities*

1. Support continuation of the State Stewardship Fund and the County Conservation Fund.
2. Participate in the development of the Land and Water Legacy Program.
3. Identify key properties necessary to preserve the contiguity of open space corridors and proactively contact the owners to discuss preservation options.

### *Guidelines*

1. Cooperate with federal, state and county agencies, other local units of government, and community organizations in acquiring land.
2. Work with willing sellers and compensate all landowners fairly and equally when pursuing the preservation of natural resource area lands identified in the Open Space and Parks Plan.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### *Priorities*

1. Forge new and innovative partnerships with other units of government and community organizations to support land acquisition and park development projects through the Conservation Fund Grant Program, Park Partner Match Program, and Scheidegger Grant Program.

### *Guidelines*

1. Cooperate with other units of government in establishing a permanent network of connected open space around and throughout Verona.
2. Support adjacent cities, villages and towns in their efforts to conserve lands that address local and regional economies, environmental ethics, and landscape-scale regional environmental concerns, and support their efforts to help create regionally significant parks, open spaces, and natural areas.
3. Where consistent with other goals of this Plan, work with partner organizations to identify or set aside lands for permanent or temporary use as community gardens.
4. Encourage greater state and federal allocation of financial resources for parks and open space in the Town of Verona.
5. Encourage greater private sector participation in the preservation of park and open space lands, with appropriate conditions, including the possibility of corporate sponsorship of park and recreation facilities.
6. Seek new and innovative methods of obtaining land, revenue, and in-kind donations.
7. Encourage volunteer programs, such as the Adult Conservation Team, that identify tasks for volunteers and provide supervision, support, and recognition for their efforts, including adopt-a-use groups to help maintain or develop specific areas or facilities.

## **PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND LAND MANAGEMENT**

### *Priorities*

1. Meet with Dane County Parks and adjacent local units of government on an annual basis to coordinate implementation of regional objectives identified in this Plan.

### *Guidelines*

1. Review and advise the Town Board and Plan Commission on all subdivision and development proposals.
2. Assist Dane County Parks staff in the creation of project plans for natural resource areas identified in this Plan for Town Board review. Project plans typically include a comprehensive

inventory of existing natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources within and adjacent to project area boundaries, recommendations for future property management, park and trail development, land acquisition, boundary adjustment(s), and identification of potential future project partners and their roles in implementing Plan recommendations.

3. Work with partner organizations to develop park lands in a manner that restores and preserves to the greatest extent possible the original character and integrity of existing natural, biotic, cultural and geographic features.
4. Request or conduct thorough archeological inventories prior to starting any park or trail development projects.
5. Support efforts by Dane County to develop new and retrofit existing park facilities to meet guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Consumer Product Safety Commission, regardless of the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.
6. Consider the protection of significant natural, cultural and historical resources on lands adjacent to and within the viewshed of county, state, and federally-owned recreation and habitat lands.
7. Work with partner organizations to help form volunteer groups, such as the “Friends” organizations managed through the Dane County Parks’ Adult Conservation Team, for developing and maintaining new and existing resources and features.
8. Encourage the creation of design standards for development near open space lands, including developments within the viewshed of park and open space lands and on ecologically-connected lands.
9. Use this plan as a guide to the acquisition of land and development restrictions from willing sellers, not as a land use plan that requires or prohibits certain uses or zoning designations. Remind Dane County planners and officials of this intent as necessary.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXISTING RESOURCES & FEATURES

### RECREATION PARKS

The Recreation Parks in the Town of Verona are Dane County Parks. Recreation parks are usually several hundred acres in size and provide a mix of natural and developed park land areas. Recreational use is extremely diverse and includes hiking, biking, horseback riding, camping, picnicking, mountain biking, soccer, aeromodeling fields, boat launches, dog walking, disc golf, bowhunting and fishing.

#### **Badger Prairie County Park**

*(Town of Verona/City of Verona, 350.2 acres)*

Badger Prairie County Park is located in the eastern portion of the Town of Verona at the intersection of CTH MV and USH 151. Recently, the City of Verona constructed a library off Enterprise Drive, which provides a new western entrance to the park. Along with a picnic shelter recreation opportunities include aeromodeling, dog exercise area, soccer, lacrosse, and mountain biking.

*Dane County Recommendations:*

- Construct a bicycle pedestrian path/entrance to the park from Cross Country Road that provides connection to the Military Ridge State Trail.
- Construct a bicycle pedestrian underpass at CTH MV to the Military Ridge State Trail parking lot.
- Complete a Master Plan for the park that incorporates the new library and future Plans for the Badger Prairie Health Care Facility.
- Construct a new shelter restroom north of the dog exercise area.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with Dane County, the City of Verona, and other groups to establish a trail system in Badger Prairie County Park.

**Prairie Moraine County Park**

*(Town of Verona, 161.4 acres)*

Prairie Moraine County Park is located on CTH PB about 1 mile south of Badger Prairie County Park. The primary uses of the park are the Ice Age Trail corridor (one of the best examples of a terminal moraine in southern Wisconsin) and an extremely popular dog exercise area.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Continue working with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation to develop interpretive signage along existing trails and at the overlook area.
- Expand park boundary north, east, and south to protect the terminal moraine and other glacial features, upland oak woodlands and scenic views as well as to provide an adequate buffer for these features.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Support partner organizations in their efforts to expand Prairie Moraine County Park.

**REGIONAL TRAILS**

Throughout Dane County's public input process, trails were the most frequently requested recreation facility addition to the park system. Development of additional trails is also consistent with providing future recreation opportunities for the forecasted aging population of Dane County. The Town of Verona supports the County's efforts to provide regionally significant recreational water, bicycle-pedestrian, equestrian and snowmobile trails.

**Upper Sugar River Water Trail**

The Town of Verona has a variety of streams and rivers that provide outstanding water trail opportunities, including the Upper Sugar River. The OSPC works with Capitol Water Trails Ltd., which has been spearheading most of the water trail development efforts in Dane County. More information on the extent of water trail development in the Verona area, public access points, and detailed trail maps can be found at the Capitol Water Trails website ([www.capitolwatertrails.org](http://www.capitolwatertrails.org)) or by calling 608-223-0995.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- None

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Continue to support partner organizations in their efforts to promote and maintain the Upper Sugar River water trail.

**Bicycle-Pedestrian Trails**

The Town of Verona is fortunate to have the State-owned 40-mile Military Ridge Trail pass through it (go to [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/specific/militaryridge/pdfs/mrtmap04.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/specific/militaryridge/pdfs/mrtmap04.pdf) for a downloadable trail map). This trail supports a variety of uses, including hiking, biking, jogging, and snowmobiling on parts of the trail. A State Trail Pass is required.

The City of Verona and Dane County Parks also have an extensive matrix of bicycle and pedestrian trails, some of which connect with the Ice Age Trail and other park trails. To download a Verona area map showing many of the trails, go to [www.veronawi.com/veronamap.pdf](http://www.veronawi.com/veronamap.pdf).

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Promote development of off-road regional trails, and/or on-road bike routes or bike lanes, by local units of government. In some circumstances, the County may consider partnering with local units of government to utilize its own staff and equipment to develop off-road regional trails, or

coordinate with the Dane County Highway and Transportation Department for grant eligibility purposes.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Support partner organizations in their efforts to promote and maintain regional bicycle-pedestrian trails throughout Verona.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS**

A natural resource area consists of lands that contain valuable natural resources or greenbelt corridors that were identified by Dane County Parks through a public process. Project area boundaries can include a mixture of private and publicly owned lands, and *decisions by private landowners to participate in any conservation programs or practices are purely voluntary*. Ideally, lands protected within these project areas should be large, contiguous blocks that may include a mixture of agricultural working lands, water, wetlands, steep topography, prairie and forests. Some of these lands may be protected through fee title purchase, however, much of the protection of larger landscapes can be achieved through purchase of conservation easements and continue to remain under private ownership. Land or easements are only purchased from willing sellers. During the Dane County Parks public input process, there was considerable interest in placing more emphasis and priority on wetland protection and restoration.

Creation of these larger areas will provide enough space to incorporate some limited recreation use without impacting the resource and also allow natural vegetation management practices such as burning to take place within them. Lands protected within natural resource areas are often owned by multiple public agencies; therefore, it is critical that Dane County, the Town of Verona, and other partner organizations work together to ensure cohesive resource and recreation management.

*NOTE: Acreages listed are for the entire project area boundary, and do not represent the actual amount of acreage under public ownership.*

### **Badger Mill Creek Natural Resource Area**

*(Town of Verona, 623.1 acres)*

This project area includes wetlands and adjacent upland buffer lands along the lower stretch of Badger Mill Creek. The WDNR is currently looking at reclassifying Badger Mill Creek as a “cool water fishery,” indicating it does have the potential to sustain some trout populations. It is currently designated a Tier II stream, meaning that it has one or more of the following attributes or designations:

- Warm water streams that may exhibit a sensitivity to development or have the ability to be restored or enhanced through management actions.
- Streams within the boundary of an approved Dane County Resource Protection Area Plan.
- Streams identified in WDNR Basin Plans with “high” or “medium” designations for habitat improvement.

Dane County takes more of a leadership role in restoration efforts and landowner contacts on Tier I streams, while non-profits and local units of government are expected to work on Tier II streams, with Dane County providing financial assistance through the Conservation Grant Fund program. In addition to biological considerations, the County may investigate increasing public fishing access through acquisition of permanent easements on these streams. Dane County works with local non-profit groups, such as Trout Unlimited and the Dane County Conservation League, to identify which streams offer the highest fishing potential and may benefit from increased public access.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Expand project area boundary to include Wisconsin Department of Transportation lands north and west and connect with the Sugar River Natural Resource Area.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with partner organizations to raise awareness of the importance of Badger Mill Creek as a natural resource.

- Direct willing land owners within the Badger Mill Creek NRA to agents who have expertise in conservation easement options.

### **Ice Age National Scenic Trail**

*(14,051.2 acres)*

The Ice Age Trail corridor traverses north to south through the western side of the County and follows the end moraines that mark the extent of the glacial advancement in Dane County. The intent of the trail is to provide users with an opportunity to see and learn first hand about impacts of the glacier on our landscape. The trail was designated a National Scenic Trail by Congress in 1980. More information about the Ice Age Trail can be found on the Foundation's website at [www.iceagetrail.org](http://www.iceagetrail.org).

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Continue working with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation on acquisition of land and development of the trail.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with partner organizations to inform local land owners of the importance of the Ice Age Trail, and direct willing land owners in the Ice Age National Trail NRA to agents who have expertise in conservation easement options and trail development.

### **Ice Age Junction Natural Resource Area**

*(Town of Verona, 1,949.6 acres)*

This project area includes Ice Age Trail corridor lands north and south of Badger Prairie County Park and the park itself. It also includes the habitat and WDOT wetland mitigation area known as Goose Lake. The Ice Age Trail Junction Area was the result of a 1991 proposal that called for a wider Ice Age Trail corridor in the Verona-Madison area to encompass key resource and scenic features associated with the trail. In 1992, the Dane County Park Commission established an intergovernmental advisory committee composed of the Town of Verona, City of Verona, Dane County Board, Dane County Executive, and the Park Commission to create a project Plan for the area that was adopted by the County Board in 1993.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Continue to implement acquisition and trail development recommendations of the Ice Age Trail Junction Area project Plan, including Ice Age National Scenic Trail/bicycle-pedestrian overpass at CTH PD.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with partner organizations to inform local land owners of the importance of the Ice Age Trail, and direct willing land owners in the Ice Age Junction NRA to agents who have expertise in conservation easement options and trail development.

### **Leopold-Riley Game Cooperative**

*(Towns of Springdale, Verona, and Cross Plains, 1820.0 acres)*

In 1931 Aldo Leopold formed a cooperative for the purpose of providing its members a place to hunt. The area encompassed all or part of 11 farms, or about 1800 acres, mostly in the Town of Springdale, but also extending into the Towns of Verona and Cross Plains. Within the reserve boundary were croplands, pastures, oak savanna, woods, cattail marsh, sedge meadow, springs and spring ponds, and the Sugar River. Historically, the Chicago and Northwestern railroad track ran through Riley on the way between Madison and Mount Horeb, the railroad right of way is now the Military Ridge State bike trail. This project area seeks to preserve the remaining natural resources and rural landscape within the original boundary designated by Leopold.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Accelerate landowner contact efforts for purposes of acquiring land or easements.
- Work with WDNR and Dane County Conservation League on exploring the possibility of providing public hunting opportunities in the future as additional lands are acquired or leased.
- Work with the University and volunteer groups to prepare a management Plan for the project area.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Support partner organizations in their efforts.

**Sugar River Natural Resource Area**

*(Town of Verona, 7644.4 acres)*

The Sugar River Natural Resource Area lies just west of the City of Verona, primarily in the Town of Verona, and includes a segment of the Military Ridge State Trail. It is one of the largest continuous wetland complexes along the boundary of the driftless area in western Dane County. The WDNR and WDOT are the primary public land owners in this project area.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Extend project area boundary south to County border at Brooklyn and include the West Branch of the Sugar River.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with partner organizations to raise awareness of the importance of Upper Sugar River as a critical natural resource.
- Direct willing land owners in the Sugar River NRA to agents who have expertise in conservation easement options.

**FORESTS**

Properties that fall under this classification are forests and woodlots that are actively managed by Dane County. A variety of forest management practices are utilized to grow healthy forests and provide timber for revenue, using sustainable harvest practices. A forest management Plan that meets State requirements and County approval is prepared for all County-owned forests and woodlots before any timber harvest takes place. Benefits of registering properties into State forestry programs include: free trees from state forest nurseries, technical assistance from state foresters and eligibility for educational assistance from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board. These lands also provide nature-based recreation as a secondary use of the site. Trail development through these properties should be coordinated with timber harvest. Hunting is also considered if sufficient acreage is available and if compatible with forest use and ecology.

**Scheidegger Forest**

*(Town of Verona, 73.4 acres)*

This forest property was acquired through a generous donation from Walter R. Scheidegger in 2001. The land was formerly the Abraham's Shooting Range for the Dane County Sheriff's Department. In 2005 Dane County Parks requested assistance from the WDNR to complete a Forest Stewardship Management Plan for the Scheidegger Forest and enrolled the property in the State Community Forest program. The Plan was completed in December 2005 and takes into consideration the property objectives outlined in the *Dane County Park and Open Space Plan*. Dane County Parks is also working on preparing a master plan for the property.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Complete a master plan for the property that will provide management and recreation use recommendations for the property.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Work with Dane County Parks to complete their master plan, and help organize a "Friends of Scheidegger Forest" volunteer group to assist with ongoing management efforts.

**Madison School Forest**

*(Towns of Verona, Montrose, 356.2 acres)*

The Madison School Forest is located on Spring Rose Road just west of STH 69. Public land owners of the Madison School Forest are the Madison Metropolitan School District, Friends of the Madison School Forest and WDNR. It is included in the *Dane County Park and Open Space Plan* to provide eligibility for

State Stewardship and County Conservation Fund grant dollars for future acquisition of contiguous parcels from willing sellers as they become available. The Friends, WDNR, and Nature Conservancy will continue to be the lead agencies on all acquisition, management, and maintenance efforts for this project area.

*Dane County Parks' Recommendations:*

- Expand project area boundary per Friends recommendation to allow additional acquisition of contiguous parcels.

*Town of Verona Recommendations:*

- Support partner organizations in their efforts to expand the Madison School Forest.

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## CONCLUSION

As the Verona area continues to develop, the Town will face increased pressures for adequate open space, park land, and recreational opportunities. This Plan offers priorities, guidelines and recommendations for dealing with those challenges. Increasing public outreach, fostering additional partnerships, and leveraging the ongoing activities of partnering organizations will be critical to maintaining the existing natural resources and features that Verona residents equate with a continued high-quality of life.