

# CHIPPEWA COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN



Adopted by the Facilities and Parks Committee 03-05-15



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **Acknowledgements**

### **Executive Summary**

### **Master Plan Development Process**

Summary

Public Input

Kick-off Meeting

Site Inventory & Analysis

    Anson West

    Anson East

    Pine Point

    Otter Lake

    Morris Erickson

    Round Lake

    Luke's Landing

    General Elements Park-System Wide

Cost Estimates & Phasing

Accessibility Summary

County Facility & Parks Committee Meetings

Funding

Revenue Enhancements

Recommendations

### **Community Benefits**

### **Appendix**

Community Needs Survey

Maps

Site Visit Meeting Minutes & Pictures

County Facility & Parks Committee Meeting Minutes

Well information

PowerPoint

Concept Master Plans

10-year Capital Improvement Plan

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Summer of 2014, the Master Plan process began for the Chippewa County Park System with **CORRE, INC** being hired to facilitate this process with the County. With four active parks (3 of which also incorporated campgrounds) and two boat landings, the County wanted to fully evaluate all facilities for potential repairs, improvements and additions based on user input, useful life, environmental wear, public safety & ADA compliance.

The Chippewa County Park System is unique in that all facilities incorporate water bodies and there is a strong water-based recreation demand in the area. In addition, the major campgrounds tied with all but one of the parks also brings a unique component that many other County Park systems do not have. In general, the campgrounds have been kept more "rustic". However, at this point, there are multiple components at each facility that need to be addressed from a useful life, safety and ADA standpoint. In addition, in keeping up with user's requests and current market trends, updates have been requested to modernize or add amenities to the parks.

Throughout the parks, there were a number of elements that were consistent in the need for updating (docks, buildings and playgrounds), and then system-wide improvements are needed for potable water and accessibility as well.

By working with the County, a master plan was developed for the Chippewa County Park System that balanced users' requests with other required improvements in the parks. All parks were evaluated and then potential improvements were ranked based on immediacy of need (public safety, useful life, ADA), cost, public desire, potential for increased revenue and fit with the overall mission of the Chippewa County Park System.

The Chippewa County Master Plan developed a plan for each facility and a detailed 10-year plan for the improvements. This 10-year plan is meant to be living document and will be revisited annually to confirm priorities and modify as necessary.

The Chippewa Facilities & Park Division has the following mission statement:

*The Facilities and Parks Division will always strive to be good stewards of the public property entrusted to our care, to be fiscally responsible in our duties as we work to maintain a clean, safe, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing environment for employees and the public we serve, and to promote appropriate recreational opportunity within our county park system.*

This plan follows this mission.

### PLEASE NOTE:

The Facilities & Parks Committee agreed this plan is a "living document" and adoption of the plan does not include monetary approval. Funding for the projects will follow the Capital Improvement Program guidelines and budget process and require a resolution adopted by the County Board before moving forward with the project(s).

# MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

## Summary

In developing the master plan, CORRE, INC worked with the County to first review all existing studies, plans, and community surveys that were already created.

After the initial kick-off meeting, we then toured all the park facilities with County Staff to evaluate the parks and amenities. During these site visits, we were able to gain valuable insight from County staff as to any specific site challenges that occurred, typical use patterns from community users and maintenance needs from staff. Site visits included evaluation of all facilities with compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA), usable life of all facilities (bathrooms, playgrounds, docks), overall safety, natural environment, and potential for added amenities.

Upon completion of the site visits, an overall listing of the observations was created and then the planning team worked to prioritize the improvements. At this time, County staff then worked with the Facilities & Park Committee to gain a better understanding of their fundamental vision for the Park System as well in order to assure that the plan that was created balanced the “wants” of the public with the fundamental mission of the Department, available funds and realistic prioritization of the improvements.

Costs were then assigned to the various improvements and then prioritized 1<sup>st</sup> within each park and then 2<sup>nd</sup> overall throughout the system. These were prioritized based on balancing public safety, ADA requirements, operating efficiencies, usable life of facilities, public wants, environmental impacts, cost and potential revenue improvements.

Based on all of the above, a presentation was then delivered to the Facilities & Parks Committee for review on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This included the conceptual park master plans as well as the Capital Improvement Plan. At the end of the December meeting, the Committee agreed that they wanted to see the County Park system improve and update as needed and were proud of the system that was in place and wanted to make sure to make the facilities grow with the needs of the community.

From this meeting, on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, further direction was given to create a 10-year plan which did have the park improvements spread out to spend approximately \$150,000 annually. It was reiterated that this would be a living, working document which would be revisited annually.

## Public Input

In 2013, Chippewa County sent out a user survey to all the campground users and received the feedback as shown in the Chippewa County Park Survey. These were e-mailed out to 773 users, and 273 users responded.

Consistent requests for improvements included flush toilets and showers (no parks currently have them), better potable water (all parks have smell/ color issues), on-site water, and moving around the log “bumpers”. Updated playground equipment at all parks was a constant comment as well. Added boat docks also ranked high in comments (parks with dock sites consistently have the highest reservation rate).

Elements that ranked high for all parks included the private dock sites, the natural environment and the fishing and water access in general.

Relative to the individual parks, the following was noted:

- In Pine Point, the number of boat docks and the large camp sites with significant vexation buffering was consistently noted in positive comments.
- For Morris Erickson, the small camp sites (stacked on top of one another) was noted for improvement, but the great family atmosphere was highly ranked.
- For Otter Lake, the rustic feel was noted multiple times as a big benefit and the fishing was key to enjoyment, but with the low elevation, there were also comments referencing the need for supplemental drainage on some campsites.

In the Summer of 2014, a user survey was then also placed on-site at the parks to try to get input from “non-campers” as well. From the day park users at all the parks, the flush toilets ranked highest consistently, followed closely by the need for playground improvements. The need for beach improvements was highly ranked at Pine Point and the need for the fishing pier to be repaired was ranked high at Otter Lake.

### ***Kick-off Meeting***

On July 24th, 2014 a kick off meeting was held for the project (detailed meeting minutes in the appendix). Within this meeting the following elements were highlighted:

With reference to employees and maintenance, the parks employs five caretakers for four locations and the central maintenance facilities are located in Cornell.

The Park User Survey results were reviewed and it was noted that no day park users were captured in that survey. Potential for posting at the parks was discussed and it was decided that the County would take on this endeavor.

Funding for the park improvements was a large concern. At this point, the County was to receive 40% of tax deed property sales for park funds, but there was no set amount that they could expect annually. Besides this, any improvements at this point were funded 50% with tax levy (based on approved budget) and 50% from site revenue at the Campgrounds. This included staffing as well.

The overall park system was discussed and the highlights are noted below. The natural, rustic feel of the park system was one of its biggest selling points along with the unique water element at all parks. The Campsites in general were very well received as far as layout and size, with complaints only at Morris-Erickson relative to closeness to neighbor and then at Otter Lake due to high water table. The forests in the area were well maintained with minimal invasive, but future planning for replanting to assure continual tree cover would be a positive element. Due to the remote location of some of the parks, potential for WiFi or other communication elements were to be reviewed as well. At a minimum, the thought was that storm shelters could be added as well in the future.

Each park was then generally discussed (prior to site visits).

#### **Anson West Boat Landing (1.2 acres with boat dock and parking for Lake Wissota)**

This boat landing hooks up with the Old Abe Trail and some of the parking is shared with Excel Energy. This is highly used and has had recent improvements.

Anson East Boat Landing (.40 acres on Lake Wissota with 282' shoreline access)

Boat launch (no dock-asphalt ramp only), signage, small parking lot, undeveloped area at low part of site. This boat landing is tucked away and not highly used. There is no on-site parking and the boat landing has not had improvements for many years. There are also property challenges with adjacent property owners.

Pine Point (23.5 acres on Lake Holcombe)

Pine Point County Park, developed in 1962, has the largest campground with 48 sites and has the most dynamic and active park users. This 23.5 acre park is located on Lake Holcombe and of the 48 sites, 10 sites have private docks and are most heavily rented. The beach is a popular area of the park, though it is currently eroding. The boat launch is heavily used by both campground users and day park users.

Amenities include the campground, beach, playground, picnic shelter, picnic area, boat launch (2 ramps with dock), parking, well, dump station, and a rental shelter.

This is the largest camping area of the parks. It is a popular campground to bring large adult groups but also children to. It is well used by fishing groups. The day park is well used here as well due to the playground, picnicking and the beach area. The potable water quality needs improvement.

Otter Lake (99.7 acres on Otter Lake - Active portion of day park: 14.9 acres/ Passive area of day park: 72.9 acres/ Campground: 11.9 acres)

Otter Lake County Park was granted to Chippewa County by WisDNR in 1970. It is the most remote park in the County. Due to this remote location, the rustic feeling of the park is important to users. One of the large concerns with this park is the goose population that is focused mainly around the beach. There is great potential for expansion of group events based on the shelters and lake location.

Amenities include the campground, beach, playground, picnic areas, 3 boat launches , fish cleaning station, parking, well, dump station, and 2 rental shelters.

This is the primary park used by fisherman and water-lovers and of all the parks, the one with the least push to modernize. On the other hand, this park has the most up to date boat landing and the Otter Lake Booster Club holds fundraising events at the large pavilion in the day park as well (and helps fund the lake aerator). Geese are a large problem on the beach and this park is the worst for cell reception. A high water table and lower elevation makes this campground the most challenging as far as drainage. The water quality needs improvement.

Morris-Erickson (5.20 acres total. Boat launch and parking = 0.8 acres, Campground = 4.4 acres)

Morris-Erickson County Park is the most family-oriented park with 28 camp sites. It was dedicated in 1935 to John Morris and Arnt Erickson. It has a camping area with an enclosed shelter, a beach, and a boat launch. Campsites are smaller than at other parks, creating privacy issues. The beach has had recent renovation to add a seawall with stairs leading down to the swimming area. The lake is also well-known for its clear water and great diving conditions.

Amenities include the boat launch, picnic areas, enclosed shelter, restrooms, fish cleaning facilities, beach and parking area.

This is the smallest of the parks and considered the most family-oriented parks. Campsites are smaller and are located closer together than at other campgrounds. The buildings at this park have reached their useful age. A current project is replacing the culverts at the entrance. The potable water quality needs improvement.

Round Lake (20.4 acres combination of wooded and open land on Round Lake)

Round Lake County Park is the newest park in the County. The land was granted to Chippewa County by WDNR in 1968, but the park wasn't developed until the 1990's. The park has a day park with a large shelter and picnic area, a boat launch, and a beach. The park is overall in good condition, though some small upgrades should be made to improve ADA access. There is currently no playground on-site, but it would be a good addition to the park.

Amenities include the boat launch, picnic areas, shelter, restrooms and changing rooms, beach, (2) parking areas. This is the newest of the parks built in the 1990s. This is a day use only park with no campground. The beach and open play area adjacent is highly used, but currently there is no playground on-site. Substantial parking, a new restroom facility, a new shelter and a boat launch also add potential for this as a great site for large events.

**Site Visits to Parks/Analysis**

*(detailed site visit meeting minutes are located in the appendix)*

**Anson West Boat Landing**

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

The County has made improvements to increase accessibility with the ADA "sidewalk" painted on the driveway and rest areas provided periodically. Rutting occurred at the top of the boat launch, but has been repaired since. Sufficient parking was provided with the allowance of use of the XCEL Energy land.



Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

- In conjunction with driveway repairs being made, incorporate landings and also stripe the path to the dock itself.
- Increased visibility/ signage for donation tube could be added

### Anson East Boat Landing

On July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

There is limited parking available at the top of the hill and it is not County owned land. The driveway down to the boat landing exceeds 8.3% grade and there is no walking path (users just walk on the driveway). Both sides of the property have had private property encroachment issues, and the adjacent property on the south has a building that is encroaching 50% on County land. The County owns 282' of lakefront, but this is accessible by land only by walking from the street down. The boat ramp itself is asphalt and in poor repair (cold patch repair continues to slough off into the Lake). The ramp is a very steep drop off for boats as well.



Discussion occurred over potential abandonment and also over developing the lakefront portion. However, neither of these options was ultimately selected.

Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

- Conduct a basic repair of the boat ramp itself replacing the asphalt with concrete pads as at the other ramps.

### Pine Point

On July 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

#### Campground:

Users have some complaints over the wood logs mark where to park in each site and prevent campers from encroaching on other's sites—some updates to these are needed based on where trees have come down and also to allow for slide-outs on some campers. Additional parking could also be added for overflow from campsites.



The campground has electricity available at all sites and dock sites are also available throughout the campground. Few people pay to use the dump site. Two different pit toilets are located on-site with the one closest to the day park being ADA compliant. No fish cleaning facilities are located at this park. There is potential for a "rustic" tent camping site to be added to this campground as well.

Potable water quality continues to be an issue as far as smell and color. The drinking water at one well has been turned off due to non-us, although the water available for other use still runs.

### Day Park/ Overall Park:



There is a large playground area that has the original equipment and is not in compliance with national playground standards nor ADA (surface, path to playgrounds, playground equipment itself). However, in discussions with park users, this is highly used by both day park users and campers.

Signage throughout the park could be updated to be consistent and reflect the current Chippewa County brand.

The boat launch has two ramps with a dock in-between. A local organization also supports the loaner board for safety jackets for children. The parking lot accommodates 18 boat/ double parking spaces, one handicapped and 31 regular spaces.

The beach area is a large safety concern with the deteriorating retaining walls and also an environmental concern with the wave erosion continuing to degrade the beach. There is no accessible trail to the beach and the changing rooms at the top of the beach are no longer used. That all being said, the beach is popular for both day park users and campers



There is a 20 x 30' shelter and five grills by the picnic area. ADA compliance could be addressed for the shelter with improvements to the pathway and ramp to the shelter, placement of ADA picnic tables and re-grading to assure that the building pads are flush with walking surfaces.

For emergency services, this park does have phone lines, but no public phone is currently available. Potential for adding storm shelter is also a strong consideration.

### Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

- Reconstruct beach south of the existing beach (in the cove)
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Day Park: provide fully plumbed restroom with showers and storm shelter capacity.
- Add small parking lot between campground and day park
- Accessibility improvements for shelter, beach, restrooms
- Upgrade playground equipment and add new surface.
- Construct a central marina dock system and/or fishing pier where old beach used to be located
- Add new docks to campground sites (increase number of dock sites)
- Campground: provide Green Flush restroom with storage
- Remove changing rooms
- Construct fish cleaning facility.
- Add tent-camping site at location.

## Otter Lake

On August 5, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

### Campground:

The campsites themselves are large and many sites have private docks. The low elevation and high water table of this facility equates to flooding a lot (throughout the campground). There is flooding between campsites 12 and 14 where the County hopes to add a culvert to address.

All of the buildings on the site are located in near proximity of one another. The Fish Cleaning House is located near the maintenance shed and bathrooms with electricity and lights inside. Due to flooding and general life of the building, this should be replaced. The maintenance shed floor is badly cracked and heaved due to flooding and is undersized as well. The firewood building is located near maintenance shed. The well is located access from the bathrooms and fish house. The bathroom (pit toilets) entrances are not flush with ground and thus not ADA compliant.



There is a small playground located across from bathrooms/fish house with 2 swing bays (4 swings) and a climbing structure and a single picnic table nearby. Per the field visit, this is underwater for all of Spring. This has the original equipment and is not in compliance with national playground standards nor ADA standards (surface, path to playgrounds, playground equipment itself).

The boat landing within the campground does not have dock and does not see much use from campers as they prefer to use the updated launch in the day park. The pavement is rutting near boat ramp. There is potential for repurposing of this. There is potential for repurposing this slip as a common dock or a fishing pier in the future.

Parking areas could be expanded as there are currently only 2 small parking areas (3-4 cars each) are located in campground. Most campers park in their campsite or leave extra vehicles/trailers in the day park lot.

Remoteness of this facility also warrants addition of storm shelters.

### Day Park:



There is a small beach that is heavily used in the summer in the day park. Nuisance geese need to be addressed. In addition, there is a small no longer needed retaining wall that should be removed. Total beach area is appx. 70' (along beach) x 85' (to canopy) with much of beach area is covered in grass – actual sand beach area only 6-12' wide. It is suggested to revitalize the beach with additional sand.

An old changing room facility could be repurposed for add'l storage (located next to the existing maintenance shed). The existing maintenance shed is undersized at 12' x 12' for the County needs.

There is a large playground area located adjacent to the parking with a 3-bay swing set (6 total swings), a Merry-go-round, a Slide, and a climbing structure. The surface was originally sand enclosed by a wooded edge, but the grass is now growing over the original sand surface and the wooden edge is flush with surrounding ground. This has the original equipment and is not in compliance with national playground standards nor ADA (surface, path to playgrounds, playground equipment itself). Total playground area is 45 x 60' (much larger than needed for the components currently there).

Signage throughout the park could be updated to be consistent and reflect the current Chippewa County brand.

There are a number of Picnic Areas in the day park. The Large shelter/Main picnic area is Located between parking and beach and is used for large events. There is potential for adding more amenities to this to market for large events (electricity, girls, etc.) Shelter is appx. 70' x 30'. The Existing topography creates a path leading up to shelter that could be paved/made ADA accessible. ADA picnic table could be added and adjustment would need to be made to allow for the foundation/ slab to be compliant. There is also a smaller shelter/picnic area located uphill from parking area/main shelter.

The Boat Landing in the day park and dock are in good condition and if paved from the parking an accessible path could be created.

#### *Boat Landing:*

This is a newer development with sufficient parking (8 spaces) and Handicap facilities. Adjustments can be made in the future to be more accessible with routine maintenance. The landing itself is in great condition.

Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

#### **Day Park**

- Utilize goose removal options for the beach
- Add large grill by main shelter & enhance electrical service
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Install Green Flush toilets that are ADA-accessible (with storm shelter)
- Replace existing fishing pier
- Demolish shed and repurpose unused changing rooms as maintenance shed.
- Replace playground equipment and add new ground surface
- Pave path to shelter to provide ADA access
- Construct new maintenance shed
- Reconfigure wall to be used only in necessary areas providing better access and more sandy area
- Pave from launch to nearest parking stall to provide ADA access
- Add passive recreation trails
- Re-grade path to have less than 8.3% slope and extend to beyond concrete ramp (Boat Launch)

#### **Campground**

- Add culvert for drainage from low point to boat launch
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Replace playground equipment and add new ground surface
- Replace fish cleaning station

- Construct additional pavilion to be used as storm shelter
- Install Green Flush toilets that are ADA-accessible
- Replace boat launch with fishing pier

### **Morris Erickson (Long Lake)**

On August 26, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

The Boat Launch is located off the main parking lot (road) with a solar powered video monitoring system for invasives. The launches (with central dock) is generally in good condition with minor rutting where the concrete meets the asphalt. There is a donation box near the launch, but it is currently hidden in the tall grass. ADA access could easily be added to the launch from the parking lot based on grades.



Divers use the lake a lot for training, but have noted that additional signage for boaters would be useful as there is a problem with awareness.

The parking lot is a large expanse of asphalt directly off the main road with a very wide driveway opening and planter/signage in the middle. Stalls are difficult to distinguish and there is no set handicap parking location. Signage for vehicle circulation improvements could be added to the parking lot and the drive into the campground.

In the entrance into the campground in 2015, the culverts are being updated and the head walls with the culverts will be updated with safety railing as well.

There are 26 total campsites and the sites themselves are smaller than most parks. There are not as many private dock sites, so potential for additions or a multi-dock system is great.

There is a picnicking area overlooking lake with 4 tables and 5 grills that are spaced out throughout area as well as multiple benches. Add'l trees planted in this area would be beneficial.

The beach is in good condition with a Retaining wall with steps down on one side to a sandy swimming area. There is currently no ADA access, however, there is a side beach area that is currently used by boats, but could be converted to ADA access. Per the site visit, non-campers commonly use beach after work.

All buildings within the park (enclosed shelter, fish cleaning building, maintenance shed) were repurposed and are not ADA compliant, do not fully address the use, and have worn out their useful life. In addition, these building are located in a low point within the park and flood regularly.

There are two small playground areas , one with swings and the second with a see-saw. The playground surface is sand.

The bathroom is also a pit toilet with two stalls each for women and men, but the entrance is not currently ADA accessible with a 2" lip.

Potable water is discolored and a constant complaint of users.

The Monument/donation plaque for the park is located in back of parking area by the electric board and is not easily found by any users. Eventual relocation should be considered.

Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

- Replace bathrooms with ADA-accessible Green Flush toilets with storage.
- Add single stall shower with holding tanks (expensive application)
- Investigate potential for replacing existing docks with a mini-marina.
- Replace fish cleaning station
- Upgrade playground equipment and add new surface. Combine all equipment into one location.
- Construct new maintenance building
- Move monument into more prominent location
- Consider moving/upgrading planter
- Add safety rail around headwall when re-constructing and tie-in with stone façade.
- Add ADA access with a ramp into the water similar to Round Lake at nearby beach/informal boat docking site.
- Repaint parking lot and provide ADA path from parking to boat launch.
- Add pavement markings at entrance to designate entrance/exit.
- Replace asphalt at top of ramp with concrete pad.
- Add information board about diving flags to alert boaters.

### Round Lake

On August 26, 2014 we visited the site and made the following observations:

As the most recent development, ADA improvements needed are minimal. There is a well-sized parking lot, great beach with ADA access, and nice shelter. The pathway from the parking lot down to the beach is also fully ADA compliant.

This is only a day-park and does not have a campground, but does have a separate boat landing.

The boat landing has eight stalls with one handicapped and has an ADA accessible path down to the ramp with rest areas.

The 35' x 24' shelter could be fully accessible with repainting of the stalls adjacent in the parking lot. The adjacent picnic area is large with tables and grills spread throughout.

The changing room/ bathroom building is a recent concrete construction, but still with pit toilets and not plumbed. The potable water is still a problem and the water fountains were turned off due to discolored and bad-tasting water.



Added vegetation in the open area by the beach would be beneficial and a playground system would be a natural addition to this park.

Ultimately, the Master Plan then proposed the following recommendations for this site:

- Add playground in clearing by restrooms.
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Extend ADA path to dock.
- Repaint stalls to allow access to path and move handicap stalls next to path by shelter.
- With driveway maintenance, re-grade and flatten resting areas for ADA along the drive to the boat launch.

### Luke's Landing

At the October 2014 Facility and Parks Meeting, a resident came in and expressed concern that the access to Luke's Landing had been mistakenly purchased by a private resident and therefore was restricting access for the public to the lake.

The Committee noted that they would further investigate the purchase, the land/road division, the signage and the potential for public access. Plans include creating a few public parking spaces and providing public access to the lake. No further development is planned.



## General Elements Park-System Wide

Throughout the park system there were a variety of elements that needed to be addressed, with few exceptions. In addition, there were a number of constant requests from the User Survey that are also further expanded upon. Please find them both below:



### *Potable Water*

At all parks, the water quality has been an issue. Although safe for drinking, the color and/or smell has made it so patrons largely do not use it. The drinking water has been turned off at all parks at this point due to this, leaving the water only for people use for rinsing. Annually, testing is done to confirm safety for drinking, (which it is), but at this point, no specific testing has been done that will positively identify the other issues. Preliminarily, based on the description of the problem, there is a high probability that the issues are high iron and hydrogen sulfide content. Complex filtration systems can be installed at a high cost, but other solutions may involve drilling new wells and water testing in other locations to see if alternate locations fare better. The plan calls for initial testing and then the design of appropriate systems within the parks to allow for this problem to be addressed. Related, the cost estimates do not include the

complex filtration system per the County's direction, but rather assume that well drilling and other more direct solutions will be able to address the problem. In order to address patron's request for good drinking water and potentially for running water in bathroom and shower facilities, this problem needs to be solved.

### Bumper Logs

In order to keep campers from backing into trees, electrical hook-ups and other elements, the County has installed bumper logs at the majority of the campsites. Many times these double as seating surfaces as well. There are some instances where campers have complained that the height of the logs prevents them from expanding their RV's slide out components. In addition, there are other campsites where trees that were being protected have since died, so the logs unnecessarily divide the campsite. Maintenance crews will continue to address these as time allows and remove or reduce the height of as applicable. However, it is not possible to remove these from the campsites as they are needed for protection of the elements noted above. These concerns seemed most prevalent at Pine Point Campground, which appeared to get a large number of larger RVs.



### Signage

The majority of the signage throughout the park system is either the wooden plaques with routed letters (subsequently painted yellow and brown) or laminated paper notices on larger boards. Some permanent signs in the park system contain out dated information in reference to fees, hours, etc. and have temporarily been “fixed” with numeric stickers and the like. The current signage does not incorporate any Chippewa County logos or branding, with the exception of the large signs at the outside of the facility.



The current signage in the park system is in need of updating to include updated fees and policies in permanent (with changeable components if need be—e.g. for fees, hours, dates) signage. By having them more permanent, the increases will not be as noticeable and the overall look. Throughout the system, all notices should be created in the same template with consistent fonts, colors, etc.



Finally, it is suggested that as signage is replaced, it incorporates the current Chippewa County Logo and brand. The parks are great facilities and we want the Chippewa County brand to fully resonate with users as well. As a secondary objective, it would be beneficial for the Park system to also create a tagline (e.g. *Chippewa County Parks...water, wilderness and relaxation....*) that exemplifies the experience that the County is promoting.

Although in the 10-year plan, the signage is farther out based on the various other more immediate needs for safety, ADA updates, etc., it is suggested that a plan be developed sooner which would then allow for gradual replacement of signs as necessary as well (vs. all at once). In addition, if alternate funding through the Chamber of Commerce or other Tourism Board is available, this project would be a great candidate.



### **Maintenance Buildings**

With the exception of the maintenance building at Round Lake and Pine Point, the maintenance buildings are in need of replacement due to useful life, undersized facilities, poor site conditions (flooding), and repurposed buildings that do not adequately fit the needs of the maintenance staff (e.g. not having any doors wider than 30", not being able to fit a mower inside).

With limited staff and multiple locations widely spread throughout the County, it is important to be able to store on-site maintenance equipment and supplies that are used on a regular basis. Related, having buildings at both the park and campground sites in the larger parks is also a need in order to operate efficiently. The Master Plan calls for replacement of the maintenance buildings at Otter Lake Campground and Morris-Erickson and the repurposing of the changing rooms at Otter Lake Day Park for an added facility. Related, at each of the parks, supplemental buildings also incorporate added storage capacity for maintenance needs as well.



### **Storm Shelters**

Based on the remote location of some of the parks, as part of the Master Plan update, we have included new facilities (shelters, restroom or maintenance) that have a secondary use for storm shelter. The building facility that it is attached to varies by Park, but this will allow for storm shelter capabilities at each of the parks in case of severe weather.



### **Restroom & Shower Facilities**

Throughout the User Study, patrons asked for plumbed restrooms with running water, flushable toilets and showers. Currently all parks have pit toilets with multiple stalls of both women and men and no shower facilities. The pit toilets utilize an exhaust system which allows for minimal odors inside the bathrooms. Some of the parks have ADA accessible buildings and stalls (Pine Point and Round Lake), while others would need to be updated to remove threshold barriers and meet stall width requirements.

At all the parks, the challenges with the potable water 1<sup>st</sup> need to be addressed prior to installing any plumbed facilities. In addition, in looking at feasibility for plumbed facilities, the high water table and low elevation of the various parks (adjacent to water bodies) also creates more challenges. Pine Point will be easiest to address as it currently already has a drainage field in place and once the potable water is addressed, a plumbed facility should be able to be installed in that area. However, no other parks currently have drain fields and realistically will require a mound system or holding tank. With the high water table, the holding tanks are more challenging and if showers were to be installed the size of the holding tank would also be cost prohibitive. For mound systems, land is required to build up a mound system and in any of the other campground facilities; land is at a premium (without removing campsites or significant amount of trees. Morris-Erickson is at the most disadvantage base on water table, facility size and proximity to the water body.

In reviewing options, a hybrid between pit toilets and a fully plumbed facility was found (Green Flush Technology). These are basically flushable vault toilets, with a tank. These are perfect for sites where conventional drain fields won't work and how they are built utilizes a reduced water flow than conventional plumbed toilets. The buildings are made with CMU



block from a local Chippewa County manufacturer and can be customized to meet your needs as well (added sinks, skylights, mag locks, etc.). Showers could be added, but based on the water use with a shower, the size of the tank and/or frequency of pumping may make it cost-prohibitive to implement.

Based on all of these considerations, within the Master Plan, the restroom facility at the Day Park in Pine Point is planned for a fully plumbed facility with showers and then the rest of the restrooms throughout the park system would at this point be replaced with the Green Flush technology, with showers further investigated as the replacement came to fruition.



### **Playgrounds**

As discussed previously, all playgrounds throughout the park system need to be updated to meet current playground safety standards as well as ADA accessibility requirements. The playground elements, surfaces and pathways too the playground themselves do not currently meet these requirements and should be replaced with playground elements and surfaces that meet all current standards. In addition, ADA compliant surfaces should also be created to get to all playgrounds as well.

In discussions with the county, the various potential surfaces were also reviewed, and based on cost-effectiveness, it was decided that engineered wood fiber chips would be the preferred option.

Based on the need, it is suggested that grants or alternate funds are applied for to allow for replacement of these facilities quicker than what is currently shown in the Master Plan.

### **Docks**

Private docks at the campsites are something that Chippewa County offers that other County campgrounds do not. These campsites are consistently reserved and there are requests for more to be added to the campgrounds. As part of the Master Plan, we have added dock sites to the campgrounds as allowed, have proposed some multi-dock sites, and are proposing an annual/bi-annual dock replacement program. Many of the current docks are coming to the end of their usable life and this program will allow for planned replacement of docks with rollable docks that are more resilient, have a longer life and will be more efficient for staff to work with annually.



### **Revegetation**

In general, the current park system has great mature trees throughout and a dense canopy in the campgrounds. This is consistently, one of the most popular aspects of the campground. There are some parks that could currently use add'l plantings (Morris-Erikson most prominently), but for future planning, we would like to implement an annual/bi-annual Revegetation plan that would plant younger trees to allow for cyclical growth which would then account for a planned replacement as the more mature trees die off.

### **ADA updates**

Similar to the Docks and Revegetation plan, the Master Plan calls for a budget towards ADA updates annually or bi-annually. This element is not for the larger ADA projects (e.g. playground replacements), but rather for updates that can be completed by staff to retrofit existing facilities. This is important to continue with updates as part of the ADA audit and to assure that the County is following the plan to make all of their facilities compliant.

### **Accessibility Summary**

As part of the inventory and analysis, the plan identified the following general items for improvement that could be addressed to fulfill compliance in accessibility

- All building/ building pad thresholds need to be flush (less than ¼" in difference). This applies to all public facilities (restrooms, shelters, fish cleaning facilities, boat launches). These are all identified in the detailed site visit meeting minutes.
- All public facilities need to have an accessible pathway to the facility (less than 8.3% grade with landings every 30' or less than 5% running), less than 2% cross-slope, and an accessible, smooth surface (asphalt, concrete or compacted screenings). These are all identified in the detailed site visit meeting minutes.
- All moveable ADA picnic tables should be placed for accessible routes.
- All playgrounds will need to be replaced with compliant surfaces and accessible pathways to the playground itself.
- In compliance with the playground standards and Title 1 based on the number of facilities in the County, one playground will need to be fully compliant with the percentages of playground types accessible as well. Therefore, one of the playgrounds will need to be fully compliant as well.
- Based on Outdoor ADA standards, although not all outdoor recreational facilities are fully accessible, there should be at least one facility that is accessible and gives a comparable experience. Therefore, at least one docksite at each campground should be accessible (no steps, more gradual topography).
- Beaches should all be accessible similar to Round Lake's beach.
- As signage is replaced throughout the system, accessible components with type size, mounting heights, etc. should be implemented.
- As restrooms are replaced, all accessible regulations should be followed with relation to stall size, mounting heights of amenities, etc.

For the formal plan, an annual review of the projects and planned improvements should occur and be documented.

### **Internal County Facility & Parks Committee Meetings**

**CORRE, INC** met with the Committee twice to review the plans during development.

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting occurred in October 2<sup>nd</sup> where the detailed site inventories were presented and a basic proposed priority of improvements was created. Committee members were also show conceptual costs and plans for restroom facilities. Although no quorum at this meeting, the members gave the direction that they were in favor of staff presenting their proposed plan for prioritization and improvements. No specific amenities were removed from consideration, but a full-fledged improvement of the Anson East site was noted as a low priority.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting occurred on December 18<sup>th</sup> where the detailed concept plans for each park was presented, in plan format and then with detailed prioritized cost estimates as well. An overall Capitol Improvement plan (8 years at ~ \$200,000 a year) was also presented along with a PowerPoint that highlighted consistent elements within the park system.

From this meeting, the Committee conceptually approved the plan and there was consensus that a forward-looking large scape planning document was needed. However, the Committee wanted a final draft to come back which would then address some specific issues (order of improvements—all in one park or divided by parks annually and removal of capital equipment).

A follow-up meeting that the County had with the Committee in January 2015 gave further direction of \$150,000 in annual expenditures to be applied to a ten-year Capital improvement plan. This plan would spread the improvements amongst the parks annually as originally presented.

## Cost Estimates & Phasing Considerations

The final detailed 10-year capital Improvement Plan is included in the appendix. As explained earlier, the projects were 1<sup>st</sup> prioritized within each park and then park-system wide. Initially, the plan was presented with an annual expenditure of \$200,000, but upon further review by the Committee, a revised annual expenditure of \$150,000 was proposed and is reflected in the final plan presented.

The initial plan also included park-related equipment expenditures, but upon review of the Committee, these were taken out of the plan so the plan could focus on the park improvements themselves.

Discussion also occurred over how to distribute the improvements---focusing all improvements at one park at a time or spreading the improvements out over the various parks over the years. The Committee decided that it made the most sense to distribute the funds throughout a number of the parks annually. This was based on allowing for improvements to occur in all regions of the County as the user groups were different for each park based on the large distance between them. In addition, by allowing for improvements to occur at each park annually, the potential for private donations would also be increased.

Costs were then assigned to the various improvements and then prioritized 1<sup>st</sup> within each park and then 2<sup>ndly</sup> overall throughout the system. These were prioritized based on balancing public safety, ADA requirements, operating efficiencies, usable life of facilities, public wants, environmental impacts, cost and potential revenue improvements. A 2% annual inflation rate was added to all items that occurred after 2015, with the exception of some of the periodic elements (Revegetation, ADA improvements, dock replacement).

## Funding Sources

For basic improvements to the facilities, more than likely, the County will need to use their own resources (Sales Tax, Type 'B' Tax Deed Land, County Non-Lapsing Funds) in order fund the improvements. These would be elements such as basic utility improvements, general clean-up, updating maintenance facilities, etc. These improvements are typically not received well for private funding due to the utilitarian aspect (adding an electric line, trimming trees) of them and/ or the non-direct user aspect (e.g. a camper can't use a maintenance shed)

However, there are grants that are available that could potentially help significantly with cost sharing of the proposed improvements within the plan. Two general types of grants are available---private and public.

### *Private Grants:*

These grants are sponsored by local community groups, large businesses, trusts or foundations. The donations of these grants can be labor, materials or monetary contributions. Typically, the projects that are awarded the grants match the mission statement of the organization (e.g. healthy kids, protecting the watershed, encouraging outdoor recreation, etc.). Depending on your community and the mission statements of those who would

donate, typical projects that would be funded through these could include playgrounds, fitness-related amenities, water-related amenities, or environmental improvements.

Chippewa County has already in the past been successful securing an Xcel Energy grant---one that focuses on protection of the watershed and encouraging healthy use of the natural resources.

The County has other large organizations with a philanthropic history that have missions that would fit with the County Park improvements. Campsites and fishing would be natural match for some and any amenities that would tie in with an active/ healthy lifestyle could potentially be a great match with the healthcare industry. In addition, updates for ADA could also be a great fit with the healthcare industry.

### *Public Grants (WisDNR)*

There are a number of WisDNR public grants that would be a great fit for a number of the improvements that the Master Plan addresses. Specifically, there are a number of WisDNR grants that could fund projects in the following categories:

- ADA updates (accessible playground, campsite)
- Water-based recreation (fishing pier, canoe launch)
- Water quality-filtration/ Stormwater
- Campground (improve existing facilities with ADA updates)

Grant applications are typically due on May 1<sup>st</sup> and not awarded until November. In addition, many times construction funds are not available until 1 year after the award (1<sup>st</sup> year for design). Grants are typically 50% and are a reimbursement program. Strong projects incorporate a number of the elements above and showing partnerships or committed funds for the County match also increases the score of the application. In addition, having the projects that you are applying for as part of a land use, park and open space and/or master plan also increase your score.

### *Individual Donations*

Within each of the parks, there are donation “tubes” by the boat landings or other locations in case patrons want to donate. In order to increase this revenue, it is suggested that the donation tubes are more prominently located and small plaques showing an illustration of a specific project that the funds will be donated to is attached as well.

### *Increased User Fees*

With additional facilities, additional annual costs are expended in maintenance and utilities. As part of the future planning, the County will evaluate if increased user fees are warranted to help cover the annual running cost of the improvements.

## Potential Revenue Enhancements

While on-site, we encountered various elements of the park system that could potentially merit additional investigation for potential revenue enhancement. These include the following:

- 1) To address non-payment of dumping fees, a lock with changeable code (which users would get from the on-site caretaker) can be installed at each of the dumping sites.
- 2) To potentially encourage additional donations, donation “tubes” can be moved to more prominent locations and displays made which show specific elements that donations are going towards.
- 3) Firewood costs could be increased.
- 4) Increased advertising for shelters could also increase rental rates
- 5) Offering specials for weekday campsite rental could increase rental revenue
- 6) Increase the number of dock sites for added rental revenue
- 7) Add multi-dock sites to campgrounds for added dock rental revenue

Annual review of user fees for the campgrounds should also be continued.

## Recommendations

As it has been mentioned already, the intent of the 10-year Capitol Improvement Plan is to revisit annually and adjust priorities as necessary. That being said, the priorities established were based on a full review of safety, useful life, ADA compliance, environment and user desires balancing this of course, with available funds. As funding is always limited, if funding varies, the project listing should be re-evaluated accordingly.

The Chippewa County Park System is truly unique in their natural, water based park system and should continue to enhance and grow the facilities they have in place. The “niche” market for these parks is tremendous, with families, fisherman, local residents and out of state vacationers, so as the parks to continue to improve, the use will continue to grow.

As part of the planning process, it was identified that there were certain features at all of the parks that it would be helpful to budget for annual or bi-annual allotments. This includes dock replacement, re-vegetation, and ADA updates. These are included within the ten-year plan currently and should be added to as needed.

Related to this is the ADA compliance aspect. Some of the fixes are simple and can be address through the regular maintenance (e.g. repainting lines in the parking lot). However, other elements need a larger capital investment and thus are within the 10-year plan. As summarized in the Accessibility Summary, these updates need to occur on an annual basis with the plan to assure progress.

Listed below is then the summary of the park/boat landing improvements that are being recommended with the 10-year capital improvement plan:

### Anson West Boat Landing

- In conjunction with driveway repairs being made, incorporate landings and also stripe the path to the dock itself.
- Increased visibility/ signage for donation tube could be added

### Anson East Boat Landing

- Conduct a basic repair of the boat ramp itself replacing the asphalt with concrete pads as at the other ramps.

### Pine Point

- Reconstruct beach south of the existing beach (in the cove)
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Day Park: provide fully plumbed restroom with showers and storm shelter capacity.
- Add small parking lot between campground and day park
- Accessibility improvements for shelter, beach, restrooms
- Upgrade playground equipment and add new surface.
- Construct a central marina dock system and/or fishing pier where old beach used to be located
- Add new docks to campground sites (increase number of dock sites)
- Campground: provide Green Flush restroom with storage
- Remove changing rooms
- Construct fish cleaning facility.
- Add tent-camping site at location.

### Otter Lake

#### Day Park

- Utilize goose removal options for the beach
- Add large grill by main shelter & enhance electrical service
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Install Green Flush toilets that are ADA-accessible (with storm shelter)
- Replace existing fishing pier.
- Demolish shed and repurpose unused changing rooms as maintenance shed.
- Replace playground equipment and add new ground surface.
- Pave path to shelter to provide ADA access.
- Construct new maintenance shed
- Reconfigure wall to be used only in necessary areas providing better access and more sandy area
- Pave from launch to nearest parking stall to provide ADA access.
- Add passive recreation trails.
- Re-grade path to have less than 8.3% slope and extend to beyond concrete ramp (Boat Launch)

#### Campground

- Add culvert for drainage from low point to boat launch.
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Replace playground equipment and add new ground surface.
- Replace fish cleaning station
- Construct additional pavilion to be used as storm shelter.
- Install Green Flush toilets that are ADA-accessible.
- Replace boat launch with fishing pier

### Morris Erickson

- Replace bathrooms with ADA-accessible Green Flush toilets with storage.
- Add single stall shower with holding tanks (expensive application)
- Investigate potential for replacing existing docks with a mini-marina.
- Replace fish cleaning station
- Upgrade playground equipment and add new surface. Combine all equipment into one location.
- Construct new maintenance building

- Move monument into more prominent location
- Consider moving/upgrading planter
- Add safety rail around headwall when re-constructing and tie-in with stone façade.
- Add ADA access with a ramp into the water similar to Round Lake at nearby beach/informal boat docking site.
- Repaint parking lot and provide ADA path from parking to boat launch.
- Add pavement markings at entrance to designate entrance/exit.
- Replace asphalt at top of ramp with concrete pad.
- Add information board about diving flags to alert boaters.

### Round Lake

- Add playground in clearing by restrooms.
- Drill new well and Install filtration system
- Extend ADA path to dock.
- Repaint stalls to allow access to path and move handicap stalls next to path by shelter.
- With driveway maintenance, re-grade and flatten resting areas for ADA along the drive to the boat launch.

## COMMUNITY BENEFITS

*The Facilities and Parks Division will always strive to be good stewards of the public property entrusted to our care, to be fiscally responsible in our duties as we work to maintain a clean, safe, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing environment for employees and the public we serve, and to promote appropriate recreational opportunity within our county park system.*

This mission statement reflects the importance of both recreation and nature to the County and this planning document reiterates the need for parks.

Parks and open spaces such as those this plan highlights preserving or creating serve a broad range of key community functions including:

- Meeting human needs for recreation and aesthetics
- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment
- Shaping the extent and patterns of development

Proper recreation-based planning requires a broad-based, fiscally responsible approach that is rooted in specific local needs and interests. Through the Master Plan development process, Chippewa County has evaluated their park system against the diverse needs of its residents, and now has a realistic cost estimate that can be used to prioritize and phase in the improvements. The ultimate result of developing the Park Master Plan will be a well-planned park system that will conserve the natural resources located on the sites, while simultaneously offering recreational opportunities in a way that is sensitive to these resources.

Chippewa County will be able to use the Master Plan to enhance/promote the following community-wide benefits as well:

- **Individual/Personal**  
People benefit in health and physical fitness when they participate in outdoor activities, and general quality of life is improved by experiencing the natural environment.
- **Social**  
Visiting a park promotes social interaction between families and the community.
- **Environmental**  
Environmentally sensitive design and the preservation of natural areas, wildlife habitat, and recreation spaces help to protect diversity and water quality.
- **Economic**  
A well-planned and implemented park system will attract people and business to a community.