

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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**CHAPTER 900**

**RECREATION**

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## **900 RECREATION**

Recreation is an integral part of the management of the Barron County Forest and recreation uses are referenced in most of the previous chapters. Due to the tremendous growth in recreational demands over the duration of the last planning period, this Plan recognizes the importance of more intensive recreational planning and emphasizes its importance with a separate chapter.

## **905 PLANNING**

In addition to this Plan, the Barron County Outdoor Recreation Plan, found at this link, (<https://www.co.barron.wi.us/Misc%20Docs/ORP/Barron%20County%20ORP%202019%20to%202024%20FINAL.pdf>) also guides the recreation program. This plan is revised every five years and is made part of this Plan. The Barron County Outdoor recreation Plan includes, but is not limited to, activities on the County Forest. It incorporates snowmobile and ATV plans, campgrounds, parks and boat landings, recreational maintenance and development plans and other recreation surveys and reports.

## **910 AUTHORITY**

The Barron County Code of Ordinances and s.28.11 Wis. Stats, authorize the Barron Property Committee to provide recreational opportunities for the public. This authority is further recognized in the mission statement for the County Forest Plan (Chapter 100), which specifically identifies outdoor recreational opportunities. This mission statement also charges the Committee to conduct activities in a manner that prevents or minimizes environmental damage.

## **915 ENTRANCE AND USER FEES**

The Committee is empowered and shall have responsibility for establishing user fees on recreational facilities maintained by the County Forest. Fees shall be comparable to fees charged by similar private facilities, other adjacent counties and are subject to periodic change by the Committee. Fees, where appropriate, will be utilized to assist in the maintenance of recreational facilities. At this time there are no recreational facilities on the County Forest that require an entrance or user fee.

## **920 RECREATIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

It is permissible for the Committee to contract with clubs or individuals to provide for recreational maintenance or services to the public. As part of the Plan, the County contracts for the following services

1. Snowmobile trail grooming and maintenance
2. Trail grading and maintenance

**925 RECREATIONAL USE PERMITS FOR ORGANIZED EVENTS**

Any event on the Forest which is advertised to the public, for which a fee is charged, or is otherwise organized as an event, requires a permit or authorization by the Committee. Permits may be issued by the Committee provided the use is consistent with management activities and will not cause resource damage. Appropriate levels of event liability insurance is required.

**930 UNDESIGNATED RECREATIONAL USE OF THE FOREST**

Undesignated recreation includes those informal activities for which the County generally does not provide a facility or service. These uses include activities such as hunting, fishing, biking, hiking and others. These uses do not require a permit but must be conducted in compliance with ordinance. The Forest Administrator and the Committee shall periodically review such uses and enact ordinances as necessary to protect from resource damage.

**930.1 HUNTING**

The entire County Forest is open for regulated hunting.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources regulates activities relating to hunting.

**930.2 FISHING**

All lakes and streams within the forest are available for fishing unless otherwise listed in state regulations. The County Forest also provides for handicap accessible fishing piers on Turtle Creek in the Silver Creek block.

**930.3 PICNICKING / DAY USE**

Picnicking and other day uses, outside of established facilities is allowed. The Barron County Code of Ordinances also regulates day use. In general, the following activities are regulated:

1. All litter, trash or rubbish must be removed
2. Cutting or harvesting vegetation is not permitted
3. Fires may not be left unattended unless the ground is 100% snow covered

930.4 CAMPING

(a) TENTS. Any person may camp in any County Forest with a tent or lesser comparable device except for Pipestone Quarry National Historical Site and in special designated no camping areas.

(b) CAMPERS. No person shall camp in any County Forest except in a wayside or parking lot located within a County Forest during the *State of Wisconsin designated gun deer seasons*.

930.5 MOTORIZED TRAVEL

The Barron County Code of Ordinances regulates motorized uses on the County Forest. The full text of these regulations is included in Chapter 700. In general the following regulations apply to motorized travel outside of a developed recreational trail system.

1. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle on a trail designated closed with a gate, earthen berm, sign, or other closure unless the operator possesses the appropriate permit.
2. Two-wheeled motorized travel (motorcycles, mini bikes, dirt bikes) is not permitted unless the machine is street legal and operating on a County Forest Road (gas tax)

930.6 OTHER USES

Other uses of the County Forest are permitted provided they are not specifically addressed with the County Code of Ordinances. Mountain Biking, Horseback riding, and other non-motorized uses are allowed on the County Forest.

**935 DESIGNATED RECREATION AREAS/USES**

Designated recreation includes those uses for which the County provides a trail or facility. The Barron County Forest has developed sites and areas to accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. The Committee may prohibit other recreation activities that are not compatible with the intent of the developed facilities.

The Committee and Forestry Department has noted a marked increase in demand for recreation facilities. Barron County may attempt to develop additional facilities and will maintain its currently developed facilities.

935.1 CAMPGROUNDS

No developed campgrounds are located within the County Forest.

935.3 PICNIC / DAY USE AREAS

The County Forest is open to picnicking / day use. There are no specifically identified Day-Use Areas on the County Forest.

935.4 SWIMMING AREAS / BEACHES

There are no developed swimming areas or beaches on the County Forest.

935.5 BOAT LANDINGS

As a result of the wide distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall Forest access management plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest primarily for recreational activities. In addition, some of these water access points also provide water supply points for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structural fires.

The existing water access points will be maintained to provide a place to launch a small fishing boat or canoe. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. These landings are built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

The following public boat access sites have been developed on the Barron County Forest and are open to public use:

935.5.1 Public Boat Access Sites Maintained by Barron County Forest

1. Kelly Lk. in Bear Lake Township.

935.5.4 Undeveloped Water Access Points

Listed below are other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe. All new sites for developed water access must be reviewed and approved by the Committee.

1. Goose Lk. in Cedar Lake Township.

2. Mirror Lk. Landing in Cedar Lake Township.

935.6 SKI/TUBING HILLS

No Ski / Tubing hills have been developed on the County Forest.

935.7 RIFLE RANGE

Barron County operates and maintains a range in Arland Township with rifle, pistol, and .22 ranges that is open to the public every day except for the nine day rifle deer season. The range is part of the Baron County Forest More information can be found here : <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Owen+Anderson+Public+Shooting+Range>

**940 DESIGNATED RECREATION TRAILS**

Designated recreation trails are those for which the County provides a designated trail and/or facility. The County currently provides trail systems that accommodate a fairly high degree of public use. The Committee may prohibit other activities on these trails that are not compatible with the intent of the development.

Whenever possible, multiple uses of various trail systems are encouraged and are subject to policy review of the Committee. Wherever possible, attempts will be made to avoid user conflicts. Recreational users, however, will frequently encounter forest management activities instrumental to the existence and future of the County Forest. Trail systems are identified in Chapter 1000.



## 940.1 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

The Barron County Forest is a multiple use forest. Non-motorized recreation trails are a legitimate use of the forest. Design and maintenance of these trails may highlight natural features present on the Forest, should minimize damage, and reduce user conflict. Trail use and development must be compatible and sustainable with the characteristics of the landscape.

It is the policy of the Committee to manage non-motorized recreation trails on the County Forest.

### 940.1.1 Hiking Trails

All of the Barron County Forest is open to hiking both on and off the forest roads.

#### 940.1.1.1 Barron County Forest contains segments of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail Ice Age Trail

The Ice Age Trail crosses the Forest in compartments 4, 5, 8, and 11. All of these trail segments have had application for national certification filed. The trail is both a national and state scenic trail and follows the end moraines of the most recent glaciation of Wisconsin. It is intended to provide a high quality rustic walking experience across Wisconsin.

1. Management practices on and adjacent to the Ice Age Trail will be designed to maintain the character of the landscape and minimize the disruption to the trail and its users where management of vegetative cover types make this possible.
2. The temporary rerouting of trails to avoid conflicts and safety concerns may at times be necessary.
3. Protection of trees and signing identifying the trail will be maintained by the inclusion of necessary provisions in the timber sale contract to protect them.
4. Trails bisecting timber sales will be cleared of trees and logging debris as soon as possible primarily by provisions of timber sale contract.
5. **All** reroutes and relocations of the trail will require approval of the Forest Administrator.

### 940.1.2 Mountain Bike/Fat Tire/Bicycle Trails

#### Undesignated Bicycle Trails

All trails, roads, and fire lanes are open for recreational bicycle use. Off-trail mountain bike use may be restricted in specific areas if such use causes erosion or other environmental damages.

#### Pipestone Quarry Mountain Bike Trail

In 2015 an interest group known as the Chippewa Off-Road Bicycle Association (CORBA), began building a technical mountain bike trail. While also improving existing trails and roads for mountain bike travel. Currently there is 3.5 miles of single-track and 4 miles of double track using existing logging roads. Additional loops will be developed in the future.

#### Silver Creek.

CORBA has also developed trails in the Silver Cr. compartment in Turtle Lk. Township. These are hand built primitive – style single track. This system has approximately 6 miles of single track and 7+ miles of double-track using existing logging roads. Additional trails will be developed in the future.

### 940.1.3 Equestrian Trails

- A. Most trails and roads of the Forest system are open for occasional horseback riding by individuals. Organized group rides and/or repeated rides on the same corridor require authorization by Forest Administrator. Off- trail riding is not permitted. Crossings of rivers and streams will be at developed crossings only.
- B. Equestrian Trails – Two trails along with a horse trailer camping area were established in the Narrow Gauge Compartment in 2010. In 2015 a southern trailhead was developed at the north end of 13<sup>th</sup> St. Establishment and maintenance was supplied by and is the responsibility of the Barron County Horse Trail Association

### 940.1.4 Ski Trails

All trails and roads are open for cross-country skiing.

The Cumberland Area Ski Touring Association (CASTA) maintains a groomed and lighted cross-country ski trail available for public use on the forest in the town of Maple Plain. This trail was developed and is maintained by a land use agreement between CASTA and Barron County.

#### 940.1.5 Future non-motorized trail systems

The development of additional non-motorized trail systems will include careful consideration of public demand, analysis of user conflicts and potential damage to the natural resource.

Non-motorized trail systems generally are not supported by statewide grant programs. The County may require proof of an organized club, or user group, with the ability to assist with maintenance and support of the trail and associated facilities. Appropriate trail passes, or other user fees, may be implemented as indicated in Section 905.

### 940.2 MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

#### 940.2.1 Designated Snowmobile Trails

Designated snowmobile trails are those recognized by the Committee as the official trails within the County. The Trail coordinator with the Sheriff's Department manages the snowmobile trail system in Barron County. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance and insurance obligations between the County and local clubs. The County has agreements with the following snowmobile/ATV clubs for trail maintenance:

1. Barron Bears ATV Club (ATV Only)
2. Barron Snowbears (Snowmobile Only)
3. Island City Snow and ATV Club
4. Rice Lake Snow and Dirt
5. Chetek Snow Flyers (Snowmobile Only)
6. Chetek ATV Cruzers (ATV Only)
7. Ridgeland Ridge Runners (ATV Only)
8. Dusty Trail Finders (ATV Only)

The Barron County Code and the Road and Access Plan regulate snowmobile trails. A summary of rules and regulations relating to snowmobile trails is as follows:

- a. Snowmobile trails are closed to cars and trucks from December 1 through April 1
- b. The Trail Coordinator will make determinations to officially open and close snowmobile trails based on snow and maintenance conditions
- c. Snowmobile trails used for logging access during snowmobile season will be posted with signs warning users of activity.

Barron County recognizes the following categories of snowmobile trail:

#### 940.2.1.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of snowmobile trail:

State Funded Trails – these are state approved and funded trail miles on designated trails that are part of a statewide network of trail systems. Snowmobile registration fees and gas tax allotments fund grants that support maintenance, rehabilitation and development of these trails. There are approximately 303.3 miles of funded trails in Barron County, with approximately 12.1 miles on County Forest Lands.

Unfunded Trails – these are segments of trail that meet the eligibility requirements for a funded trail system but have not been included in the grant system due to restrictions on available funding. There are approximately 25.2 miles of unfunded trails in Barron County, with approximately 0 miles on County Forest lands. It is recommended that the county continues to apply for grants to include these in the funded system.

Local/Club Trails – these are trails that are not funded by State maintenance grants and may or may not be groomed by local clubs. These trails may not meet eligibility requirements of a funded trail and may dead end at local businesses. There are approximately 5 miles of club trails in Barron County, with approximately 0 miles on County Forest lands.

#### 940.2.1.2 Trail Maintenance

Barron County contracts with the recognized snowmobile and ATV clubs. The County periodically assists with mowing, grading, or other trail maintenance projects as needed. The County shall inspect and monitor bridges and other infrastructure on the trail system and attempt to secure funding from grants, or other sources, to periodically replace or rehabilitate as needed.

#### 940.2.1.3 Future Snowmobile Trails

The Committee shall have jurisdiction over any trail development proposals. Future trails will be considered only after careful consideration of costs, benefits and impacts and as part of a larger planning effort.

Proposals to relocate trails or to make adjustments to the existing trail system will be encouraged where there are concerns of public safety or environmental damage. Unfunded and club trails should be evaluated for maintenance funding application.

#### 940.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

Designated ATV Trails are those recognized by the Property Committee as official trails within the County. These may lie on County, private, or other agency lands. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance and insurance obligations between the County and local clubs. The County contracts with the following snowmobile/ATV clubs for trail maintenance:

1. Barron Bears ATV Club (ATV Only)
2. Barron Snowbears (Snowmobile Only)
3. Island City Snow and ATV Club
4. Rice Lake Snow and Dirt
5. Chetek Snow Flyers (Snowmobile Only) 14

6. Chetek ATV Cruzers (ATV Only)
7. Ridgeland Ridge Runners (ATV Only)
8. Dusty Trail Finders (ATV Only)

There are numerous types of designated ATV trails managed by Barron County. These trails are further identified in the appendix.

#### 940.2.2.1 Trail Types

The County recognizes several different classifications of ATV trail. Maps are in Chapter 1000 for reference.

1. Funded Winter ATV Trails – There are approximately 28 miles of winter funded ATV trail managed by Barron County, with 0 miles on County Forest lands.
2. Funded Summer ATV Trails – these are trail systems funded for only summer winter use. These trails are open from May 1st – November 1st. There are approximately 89.90 miles of summer use ATV trails managed by the County with 4.90 miles on the County Forest.
3. Funded UTV Trails – UTV's, or side by sides, can be allowed on ATV trail systems. Barron County allows for UTV's on 89.90 miles of the trail system within the County.
4. Funded Troute/Hybrid Trails – The ATV/UTV program does not allow for full maintenance funding on ATV/UTV trails that are open to highway traffic (cars, trucks, etc.) ATV trails with this dual use that were maintained and funded prior to August 1, 2012 are still funded at 100% of the annual per mile maintenance rate. Trails funded after August 1, 2012 allow for partial funding under the following

categories:

4a. County Forest Gas Tax Roads – these are gas tax roads used as a connector to trails or services and are funded at a rate determined by the full per mile funding rate, less gas tax funding rate, not to exceed 50% of the full maintenance funding rate. Barron County maintains 0 miles of County Forest Road Troutes.

4b. Hybrid Trails – these are trails designated as ATV trails, opened after August 1, 2012, that also permit highway vehicle traffic. These are funded at 50% of the annual maintenance funding rate. Barron County maintains 0 miles of Hybrid/Troute trails.

4c. Club Trails – These re trails not funded under the state ATV program. In some cases these are trails that are maintained and may be added as a funded trail at a future date. Barron County recognizes 0 miles of club trails.

4d. State Trails – Barron County manages and ensures the maintenance of the following State Trails within Barron County:

1. Cattail State Trail
2. Wild Rivers State Trail

#### 940.2.2.2 ATV Trail Maintenance

For the purpose of ATV trails, the term sustainability is intended to mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident there are no circumstances where an ATV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and eliminates the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity, causing erosion.

The County shall inspect and monitor trails, bridges and other infrastructure and attempt to secure funding from grants, or other sources, to periodically replace improvements or rehabilitate trail surfaces or bridges as needed.

#### 940.2.2.3 Future ATV Trails

The use and popularity of ATV's and UTV's increased dramatically over the period of the 2006-2020 County Forest Plan. Increased usage of trail systems proved a tremendous need for much higher levels of trail maintenance in order to manage environmental damages.

Adding ATV trails should be done as part of larger planning effort that incorporates considerations for impact on other users and user groups; how future trail systems will be maintained; and impact on the natural resources. New ATV trail systems will only be considered with the following framework:

- “Trails should be designed and planned to connect communities”
- “Loop trails will be discouraged unless part of a larger trail system that connects communities”
- “New trails will only be allowed if they fit within an ATV plan established by the Committee”
- “Trails will only be considered on suitable soils and in appropriate locations.
- “Dead end trails will not be sanctioned as part of the County ATV trail system”

It is critical that trail layout and design is done in such a way as to prevent erosion and soil loss. Trails must be developed to sustainably. For the purpose of this plan, sustainability is defined as follows:



**Sustainability** – For the purpose of ATV trails, the term sustainability is intended to mean the development of a trail surface that is maintainable. It appears evident there are no circumstances where an ATV trail can be considered sustainable without intensive maintenance. Of primary importance, trail surfaces need to be conducive to periodic grading or restoration that promotes water runoff from the trail surface and eliminates the opportunity for water flow to gain velocity, causing erosion. Trails should be built with a slight crown and appropriate ditching to allow for adequate and proper water dispersal.

To this end, the construction and development of new ATV trails are to comply with the **WCFA ATV/ORV Trail Standards**,

#### 940.2.3 Designated Motorcycle Trails

Operation of motorcycles on the County Forest is prohibited.

### 940.3 RECREATIONAL TRAIL PERMITS

#### 940.3.1 Storm Water Discharge

In general, any trail construction or rehabilitation activities that disturb one acre or more of land will require a Storm Water Discharge Permit. There have been instances of inconsistent application of permit requirements statewide. In order to further define the County's understanding and implementation of permit requirements, the following current acceptable process will be used for determining when a permit is needed.

- The 1 acre threshold will be determined by measuring/estimated new disturbance or disturbance of previously grassed surfaces.
- Periodic grading of impervious or non-grassed trail surfaces is not considered disturbance.
- Restoration of water filtration/diversion devices, such as sediment traps or catch basins is considered maintenance and not disturbance

- Reconstruction of previously grassed ditch lines as part of trail rehabilitation is considered disturbance.

#### 940.3.2 Crossing Permits.

Permits are required for bridges or culvert crossings of navigable waterways. These permits will either be classified as general or individual depending on specific site conditions. These permits are not required for culvert or bridge crossings of non-navigable or intermittent streams, nor are they required to install a clear span bridge over wetlands.

#### 940.3.3 Wetland Fill

Permits are required at any time that fill is placed in a wetland. Permits are available to fill small wetlands for recreation trail purposes. Wetland fill must be less than 10,000 square feet and the permit does not require wetland mitigation. Clear span bridge and boardwalks placed on pilings generally do not require a wetland fill permit. Puncheon style bridges do require a permit.

## **945 RECREATION PROGRAM FUNDING AND GRANTS**

### 945.1 RECREATION TRAIL FUNDING

#### 945.2.1 Non-motorized trail systems

At this time, there is very limited access to any grant funds that will assist with non-motorized recreational trail maintenance. The County relies on local clubs and associations.

#### 945.2.2 Motorized trail systems

There are numerous grant programs available to offset motorized trail system costs.

Barron County utilizes the following funding sources:

1. Snowmobile Maintenance - \$300/mile
2. ATV Summer Maintenance - \$600/mile
3. ATV Winter Maintenance - \$100/mile
4. UTV Maintenance - \$100/mile
5. ATV Rehabilitation - 100% grants
6. ATV Development - 100% grants