

Florence County

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-2024



Florence County, Wisconsin

Florence County Forestry and Parks Committee

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Town of Florence: Timothy Bomberg, John Holbrook, Shane McLain
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Florence County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-2024

Adopted January 15, 2019

Prepared by:



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Cover Photo: Lake Emily

RESOLUTION 2019-01

**APPROVAL OF THE FLORENCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE
OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN 2019-2024**

WHEREAS, Florence County is devoted to providing aesthetic and functional parks and recreational facilities to the residents of, and the visitors to, Florence County; and

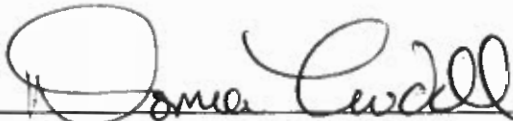
WHEREAS, Florence County Forestry and Parks Committee realizes the need for sound planning in order to meet the needs of park and recreational facility users; and;

WHEREAS, this plan highlights: the water resources and open spaces in Florence County; its population characteristics; outdoor recreation supply inventory; outdoor recreation needs assessment; and recommendations for ADA accessibility in Florence County and the associated Towns parks; and

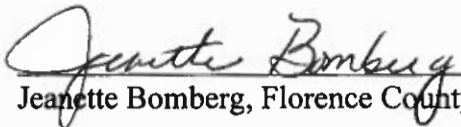
WHEREAS, the County's outdoor recreation goals, objectives, and capital improvements projects, and annual operation and maintenance programs with respect to implementation of the Plan are also enumerated in the Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Florence County Board of Supervisors hereby approves this *Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2019-2024* as the County's official plan for growth and development of parks and recreation opportunities over the next five years.

Hearby granted this 15th day of January, 2019 by a majority of a quorum of the Florence County Board of Supervisors.



Donna Trudell, Florence County Clerk



Jeanette Bomberg, Florence County Board Chair

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Plan Objectives

INTRODUCTION

Florence County is approximately 497 square miles in size and consists of eight towns including Aurora, Commonwealth, Fence, Fern, Florence, Homestead, Long Lake, and Tipler. According to 2017 American Community Survey estimates, Florence County has 4,463 residents. The county has no incorporated communities; however, the Town of Florence has the highest population of all the towns with a population of 2,007, and serves as the county seat and major government activity center.

The Florence County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan has been developed to serve as a guide in the maintenance and development of quality outdoor recreation and facilities for residents and non-residents alike.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The objectives of the Florence County Outdoor Recreation Plan are:

- 1) To protect and enhance Florence County's natural resources.
- 2) To establish a basis for providing a variety of public recreational facilities to meet the needs of Florence County residents and visitors.
- 3) To identify factors contributing to the recreation needs of Florence County at the present time and for the next five to ten years.
- 4) To provide the county with a period of eligibility for funding assistance through programs such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF or LAWCON) and the DNR Stewardship Fund.
- 5) To provide the county with an implementation plan for compliance with accessibility requirements under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1978, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
- 6) Promote cooperation and coordination of Florence County's recreation programs between municipalities, school district, DNR, Wisconsin Department of Tourism, private sector recreational businesses, and service programs to produce maximum public benefit and avoid duplication of services and administration in meeting the recreational needs of county residents and visitors.
- 7) Identify priorities for the expenditure of funds in the maintenance and development of recreational facilities in order to provide high-quality and maintained facilities for the recreation user.

PLANNING PROCESS

One of the first steps in this planning process was to gather data regarding the condition of recreation facilities in Florence County. In 2005 and 2011, all outdoor recreation facilities in the county were inventoried. Evaluations of the number and condition of equipment and facilities, and accessibility by persons with disabilities were conducted. Questions were asked of area businesses, county clubs and associations, lake associations, town and county supervisors, and county agencies. They were asked their opinions of county facilities and programs to determine what updates were needed for recreation facilities throughout the county. The results of these inventories were compared with facility standards

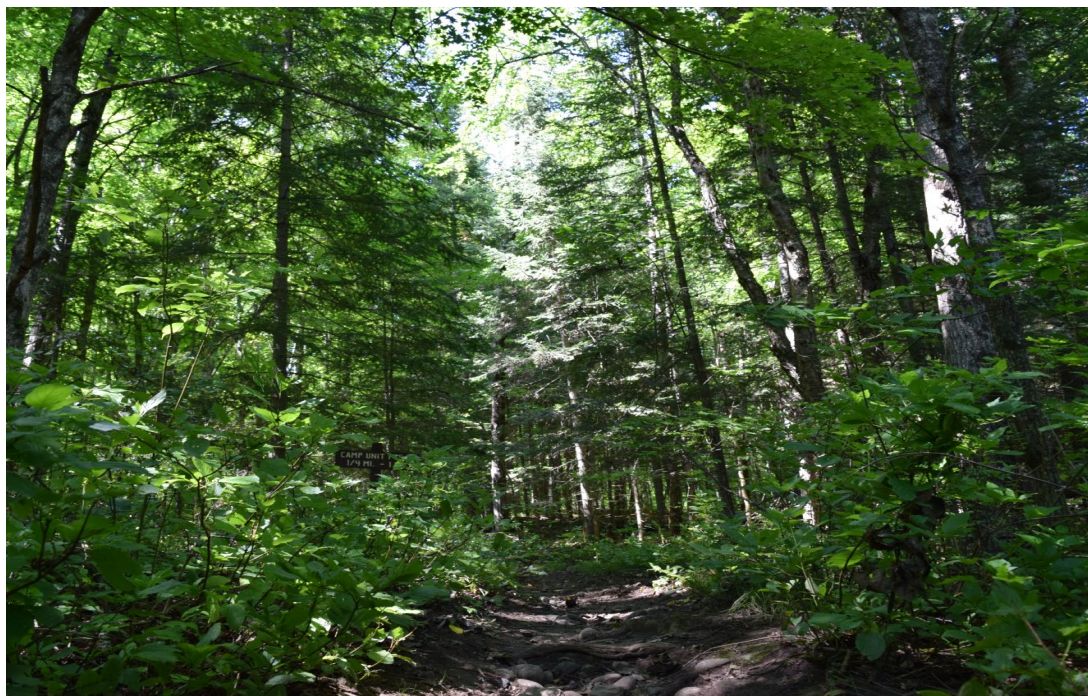
set by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) to determine where the county may be lacking in recreational facilities or open space park land.

In 2018, the Florence County Forestry and Parks Department staff reviewed this collected information for an update of facilities and open space park land. A list of capital improvements was prepared for the five-year planning period of 2019 to 2023. This list is a guide for the county when budgeting and scheduling park improvements. The findings of the evaluation and planned improvements were presented on September 12, 2018, to the county Forestry and Parks Committee.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to create optimal recreational opportunities in Florence County through the current recreation programs and the development of new programs. This document is intended to provide guidance to Florence County and its towns in an effort to meet the recreational needs of its residents and visitors. The plan documents current recreational facilities and opportunities and identifies future needs in the development and coordination of outdoor recreation areas within the county.

When this plan is adopted by the county and towns, it will provide eligibility for LWCF and other funds available through the DNR Stewardship Program.

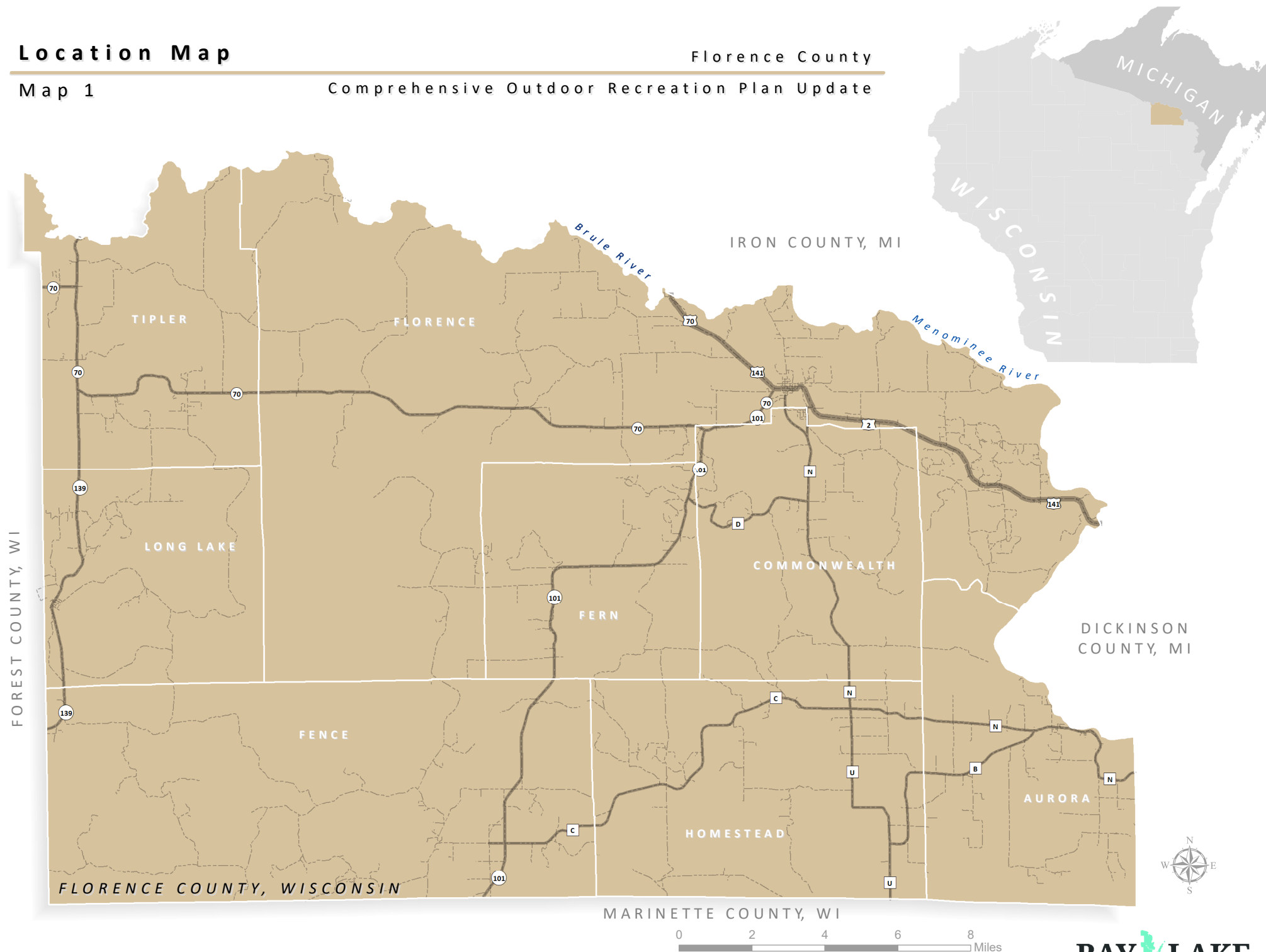


Location Map

Florence County

Map 1

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

Disclaimer: This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. Bay-Lake RPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained. Sept. 2018.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

County Description

- Florence County consists of 318,300 acres of land. Of this acreage, 45% of the land is publically owned.

With the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest located in the county, 84,473 acres of the county is federally-owned. The State of Wisconsin owns 22,000 acres, Florence County owns 36,463 acres, and the towns collectively own 410 acres.

There are approximately 42,000 acres of privately-owned, industrial forestland that is open for public use.

Land ownership is illustrated in Map 2.



- These forests covering Florence County consist largely of northern hardwoods. Lumbering in Florence County primarily took place after 1850. By 1898, much of the white pine had been harvested and the focus turned to hemlock and hardwoods in the early twentieth century.
- Forested areas and value-added products are economically, ecologically, and recreationally valuable to Florence County.
- The bedrock underlying Florence County is some of the oldest and most complexly formed rocks in Wisconsin. The crystalline rocks near the community of Florence were mined for iron ore. Mining operations began at the Florence Mine in 1879, with production peaking in the 1920s.
- In addition to forested resources, the DNR Surface Water information indicates there are a total of 265 lakes and 165 rivers and streams covering a surface area of 6,833 acres and 1,636 acres, respectively.



Population and Growth Trends

Florence County's population growth has slowed or declined over past decades. The population growth rates remain behind both state and national trends. The growth that occurred from 1980 to 2000 is gradually declining. This is a trend occurring in the more rural counties of the state according to county economic and demographic profiles.

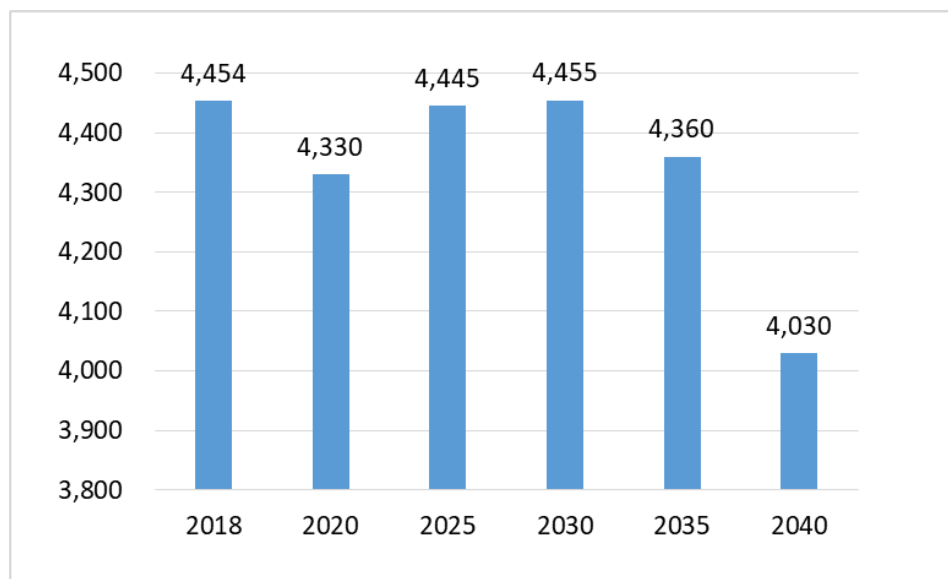
Table 1.1: Florence County Population

Community	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018 Estimate	1980 - 2018 % Change
Town of Aurora	1,050	1,036	1,186	1,036	1,059	0.86%
Town of Commonwealth	369	407	419	399	403	9.21%
Town of Fence	192	222	231	192	192	0.00%
Town of Fern	111	112	153	159	160	44.14%
Town of Florence	1,809	2,097	2,319	2,002	1,994	10.23%
Town of Homestead	272	337	378	336	342	25.74%
Town of Long Lake	199	205	197	157	158	-20.60%
Town of Tipler	170	174	205	142	146	-14.12%
Florence County	4,172	4,590	5,088	4,423	4,454	6.76%
Wisconsin				5,686,986	5,816,231	
United States				308,400,408	326,971,209	

Source: U.S. Census Population 1980-2010, DOA Estimates 2018, and the Bay-Lake RPC.

Figure 1.1 shows projected growth trends for Florence County from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) projections. This data shows fluctuation in the forecasted population from 2018 to 2030, with a steep decline from 2030 to 2040.

Figure 1.1: Florence County Population and Projections, 2018-2040

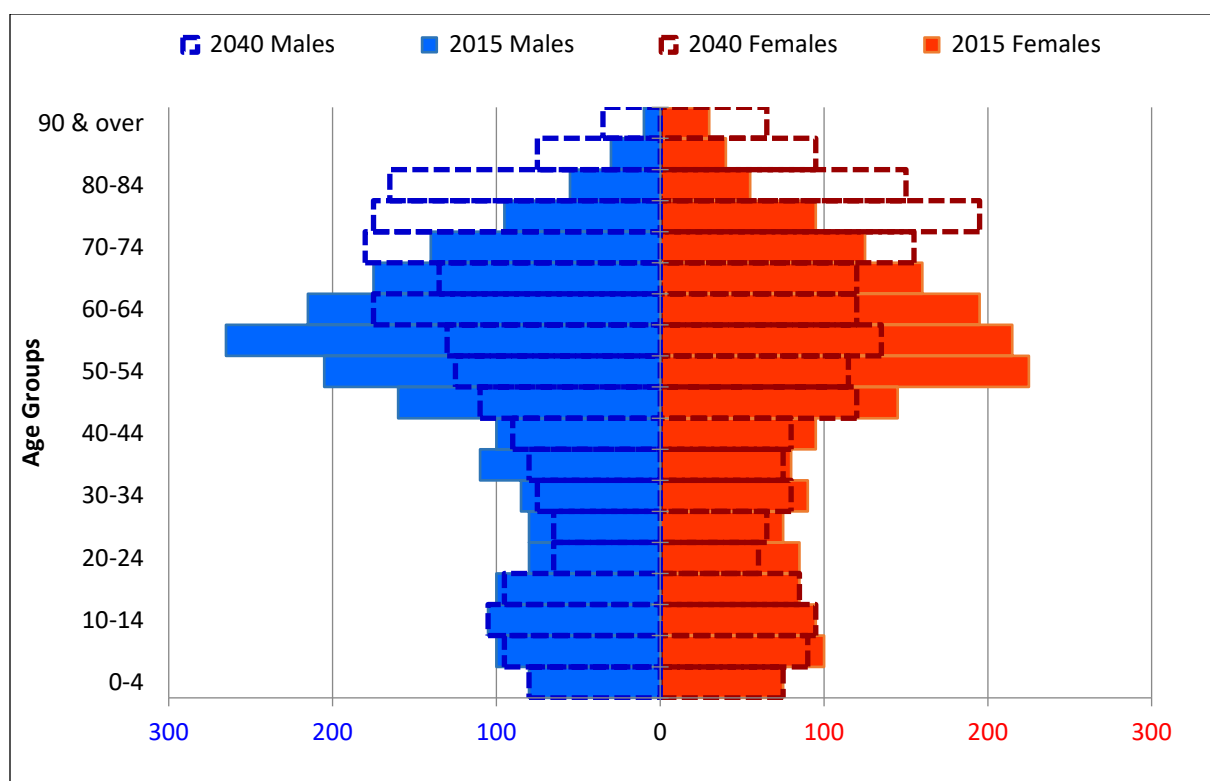


Source: DOA 2018 Estimates and 2020-2040 Projections, and Bay-Lake RPC.

Looking more closely into age groups and gender, can be helpful for parsing recreational preferences. The population pyramid in Figure 1.2 shows Florence County age and gender distributions between 2015 and 2040. The DOA is projecting that the of 20 to 44 years old age groups, which are prime ages for recreating and working, will be shrinking in the future. This is also true of the 45 to 64 year group in

2040. The younger population of 5 to 19 years of age, is forecasted to remain at steady levels through to 2040. Recreationally, this group is an important segment that tends to participate in organized leagues for baseball, soccer, and similar activities. The older age cohorts of 70 years and older; however, will have more individuals in them by 2040 than in 2015. The population is aging in Florence County, as it is overall for the State of Wisconsin. These numbers indicate a greater proportion of an older population than younger in Florence County into the future.

Figure 1.2: Florence County 2015 and 2040 Population Projections



Source: DOA 2015 Estimates and 2020-2040 Projections, and Bay-Lake RPC.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, the graduation rate in Florence County for all students in 2016-17 was 99% (Wisconsin Information System for Education Data Dashboard, 2018). Florence County's 2016 median household income (MHI) of \$46,595 is lower than the state's MHI of \$54,610.

The largest share of employment in Florence County is in Government (22.6%), Manufacturing (20.6%), and Accommodation and Food Services (20.5%) sectors, according to 2016 industry employment data. The Wisconsin Office of Economic Advisors has forecasted growth for all of the workforce region (11 counties) that includes Florence County. The report, however, states that growth is constrained by the region's aging population. It also states that the most significant growth forecasted through 2022 is in the health services industries.

Chapter 2: Outdoor Recreation Inventory

FLORENCE COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION INVENTORY

The following is a list of national, state, private, Florence County School District, and county and town recreational sites.

County Parks

The following are the county-owned parks in Florence County. Map 3 illustrates the Florence County recreational facilities.

County Fair Park

The Florence County Fairgrounds is located on CTH N, one-third mile south of US 2. The grounds are approximately 17 acres in size and host a variety of activities in addition to the County Fair, including girls softball, minor league and peewee baseball, soccer, family reunions and weddings, horse clinics and shows, as well as other local group and club functions. Facilities include a 4,000 square foot exhibit building that includes the fair office, kitchen and bathrooms, an arena with terraced hillside seating, a 1,200 square foot pavilion with stage, a 12x16-foot beer garden, a 1,200 square foot livestock building, soccer field, softball field, baseball field, an open grass area, and gravel parking lot. County Fair Park Campground is located in the Town of Commonwealth.

Lake Emily Park

This facility has 18 camp sites on a quiet lake. Sites are \$20.00 per night. There is a boat launch, pit toilets, water, a sandy beach, and opportunities for fishing. Each site has a picnic table, a fire grate, and electric hook-ups. This park also has a pavilion. Sites are available on a first come first serve basis. Lake Emily Park is located in the Town of Commonwealth.

West Bass Lake Park

This facility has 29 camp sites on a pristine and quiet lake. There is a boat launch, pit toilets, water pumps, and a sandy beach. Each site has a picnic table and a fire grate. Sites are available on a first come first serve basis. West Bass Lake Park is located in the Town of Homestead.

Fisher Lake Park

This park is located on a 54 acre lake that is stocked with northern pike, bass, pan fish, and trout. There is a boat launch, pit toilets, picnic tables, a sandy beach, and a baseball diamond. Fisher Lake Park is located in the Town of Florence.

Kenneth Thompson Memorial Park

This park serves as a habitat for loons and osprey. Visitors can launch a boat to fish the 55-acre Siedel Lake for northern pike, bass, and pan fish. Picnic tables and a boat landing are available in this very private setting. Kenneth Thompson Memorial Park is located in the Town of Fern.

Keyes Lake Park

Keyes Lake has clear, spring fed waters that provide good swimming and fishing. The park has picnic facilities, a sandy beach with a water slide, a boat launch, picnic shelters with tables, pit toilets, changing rooms, a volleyball court, and a swimming raft.

Loon Lake Park

Loon Lake Park has walk in access that leads to the 53-acre Loon Lake where anglers will find northern pike, largemouth bass, and pan fish.

Popple River Park

This park is an undeveloped, scenic park on a designated Wild River. The park offers canoe and kayak access, picnic tables, and a spot to fish for brook, brown, and rainbow trout.

Vagabond Park

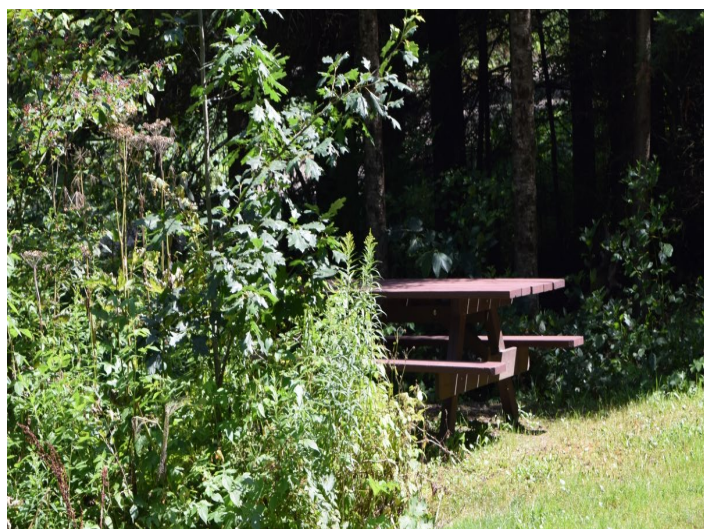
This park is located on the 928-acre Twin Falls Flowage. Vagabond Park has a sandy beach, picnic area, a boat landing, and pit toilets. The flowage is scenic and semi-private with islands and very few dwellings. Anglers will find northern pike, walleye, bass, and panfish. There are picnic tables and a swimming beach.

Campgrounds

There are presently ten public (7 county-owned and 3 town-owned) and two private camping facilities in the county contributing to a total of 175 developed campsites. Support facilities, such as toilets, utilities, tables, grills, parking, and shelters are usually available on the campgrounds or in conjunction with associated day use areas. Walk-in campsites are located at Perch and Lauterman lakes, in the state natural area, and along the Pine and Popple rivers. Walk-in campsites, by definition, are accessible only by canoe, boat, or foot. Improvements, at most, are generally limited to a cleared tent site and fire ring. In addition to the designated walk-in campsites, primitive camping, which provides no physical site improvements is permitted on most of the county and national forest lands within the county. Halls Creek and Bush Flats equestrian trail allow camping at the trailheads.

Day Use Areas

Day use areas are defined as picnicking facilities used in conjunction with other activities such as campgrounds, swimming beaches, waysides, or other park and playground facilities. The amenities generally include picnic tables, garbage cans, toilets, and drinking water with some areas having charcoal grills. Day use areas play an important role in outdoor recreation for both residents and tourists. They serve as a place to gather for local residents and as a destination or place to stop and relax for tourists as they pass through the county. The day use areas are identified on Map 4.



Wild Rivers Interpretive Center

The Wild Rivers Interpretive Center is on a 34-acre site located at the intersection of US 2/141 and HWY 70/101. It serves as an informational visitor's center for Florence County. The Wild Rivers Interpretive Center is located within a 10,000-square foot building that also houses the USDA National Forest Service District Ranger Office, the office of the DNR Florence County Ranger, the office of the Florence County Forestry and Parks Administrator, the office of the University of Wisconsin Extension, the Department of

Motor Vehicles, a gift shop, and interpretive displays. On the grounds, there is a dog park, RV dump station, hiking trail, swing set, pavilion with a picnic table, and a large parking lot.

Florence County School Forest

The Florence School District has approximately 118 acres of forest land divided into two units. The first unit is 80 acres and is called the "Lake Emily Unit" due to its proximity to Lake Emily. The Lake Emily Unit serves as the school forest. The second unit is 38 acres and was once a farm operated by Florence County to assist those in need. Various species of trees have been planted at both units since the 1960s.

Whisker Lake Wilderness Area

The Whisker Lake Wilderness Area is a federally-owned 7,765-acre area located in the north central portion of the county, in the Town of Florence. The Whisker Lake Wilderness is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is open to all types of recreation except motorized or other mechanical uses. This location is part of the Nicolet National Forest and is managed as wilderness to preserve its natural state. There are no facilities at this wilderness area with the exception of natural (unmaintained) trails and information stations at the entrances.

Spread Eagle Barrens

The Spread Eagle Barrens is a state-owned 10,000-acre state natural area located in the east central portion of Florence County. The barrens is managed by the DNR and consists of grasslands, plains, ridges, hills, kettles, solitary pines and oaks, and occasional large blocks of timber. The Spread Eagle Barrens represent the largest ecological community of its kind remaining in Wisconsin. The goal of the Spread Eagle Barrens management plan is to preserve, restore, and maintain habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species. The management plan tools include timber harvest and prescribed burning.

Town Parks

The following are the town-owned parks in Florence County.

Town of Aurora Menominee River Boat Landing Fisher Lake Boat Landing Town Recreation Area	Town of Homestead Bush Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite East Bass Lake Boat Landing East Bass Lake Park / Rustic Campsite Mirror Lake Boat Landing Scout Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite Sand Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite
Town of Fence Town Park	
Town of Fern Town Park	Town of Long Lake Town Park Long Lake Beach Long Lake Boat Landing Fay Lake Boat Landing
Town of Florence Florence Utilities Property Fischer Lake Pier Fishing	

Walking, Hiking, Bicycling and Other Trail Use

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding has often occurred on low volume town and forest roads. There are two equestrian trails: Halls Creek (approximately 20 miles of trail) and Bush Lake Flats (7.5 miles of trail on one loop). Both of these trails are located on CTH C. There is overnight camping, picnic tables, fire rings, and hitching posts. These trails are shown on Map 5.

Hiking/Nature Walks

As shown on Map 5, there are several marked hiking/nature trails in Florence County. The majority of these trails can be found within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. In addition, there is an abundance of unmarked trails on county forest land, state lands, and scenic low traffic volume roads within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest that provide many opportunities for hikers. Backpacking is permitted on all national and county forest lands in Florence County.

Bicycling: On and Off-Road

Bicycling is a popular recreational activity that is undertaken by bicyclist of various skill levels. A bike trail is a separate pathway designed exclusively for use of bicyclists, and ideally independent of other transportation facilities. Bike routes share the roadway with motor vehicles with the routes designated by appropriate bike signs. There are no designated bike trails or routes currently in Florence County. However, there are many miles of low-volume town, county, and federal forest roads offering varied elevations and many opportunities for the beginner to experienced bicyclist.

Mountain biking can be distinguished from bicycling in that it normally takes place off-road. Mountain biking has gained in popularity and has resulted in designated mountain biking trails and increased tourism throughout Florence County. Mountain biking trails are shown on Map 5.

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

There are 132 miles of state-funded ATV trails in the county (61 miles of summer trails and 71 miles of winter trails). There are many miles of town and county forest roads linking these trails. Additionally, these trails connect to Marinette County, Forest County, and the State of Michigan trail systems. Many towns have opened some or all of their roads for ATV use.

Operation of ATVs are permitted on county forest roads unless otherwise posted, gated or bermed. Users of these roads and trails are required to comply with all applicable regulations. Trail maps are available at local businesses.

Snowmobiling

There are over 138 miles of DNR-approved, public, marked trails in Florence County, known as the Blue Ox Trails (illustrated on Map 6). These trails are maintained and groomed throughout the winter season providing area residents, clubs, and visitors with beautiful views of nature, combined with the most picturesque trails in the state. Some town and National Forest roads that are not plowed in the winter provide additional snowmobiling opportunities. Club trails (which are not state approved) provide additional opportunities for snowmobiling. Users of these trails and roads are required to comply with all applicable regulations.

Snow and Cross-country Skiing

Keyes Peak is a publicly-owned downhill ski facility in Florence County. The 20-acre facility offers three tow ropes, a log lodge with concessions, ski and snowboard rental equipment, tubing hill, snowmaking equipment, and has a 207-foot drop.

There are seven marked cross-country ski trails in the county. Ski facilities are identified on Map 6.



Golf and Tennis

Currently, there is no operating golf course in Florence County. In the Town of Fence, there is a town park which has a tennis court for public use. There is also a park adjacent to the Sacred Heart Church in the town of Aurora that has public tennis courts.

Hunting and Trapping

Hunting and trapping are a strong tradition in Florence County and in Wisconsin. Florence County has an abundant supply of wildlife including white-tailed deer, bear, snowshoe hare, gray squirrels, ruffed grouse, and turkey. These wildlife are a part of a hunting tradition in addition to wetland species which include beaver, mink, muskrat, and otter. Waterfowl within the county are somewhat less abundant due to the extensive forest cover. Common waterfowl species include mallard, wood duck, blue-winged teal, black duck, and mergansers. Upland furbearer species include fox, coyote, raccoon, fisher, and bobcat.

Hunting and trapping are allowed within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, on state-owned lands, on county forest lands, and select privately-owned corporation and utility lands. Lands enrolled under Forest Crop Law and Managed Forest Law may be open to the public according to rules established in Wisconsin State Statutes.

Five areas are maintained for the sole use of the walking hunter in Florence County. These are the Halls Creek Walking Trail, Lake Emily Walking Trail, Bush Lake Flats Walking Trail, Rainbow Hunter Walking Trail, and the LaMontage Walking Trail.



Three areas are managed to promote better grouse habitat. They are the LaMontage Creek Grouse Management Area on the county forest, the Porcupine Lake Grouse and Woodcock Management Area on the Nicolet National Forest, and the Aurora/Winchester Ruffed Grouse Management Area on the county forest. There is also one private club offering trap shooting in Long Lake.

Target Shooting

There is one publically-operated shooting range in the county. It is the Florence County Forest Rifle Range operated by the Forestry and Parks Department with the assistance of Homestead/Aurora Conservation Club. The range is located off of CTY Hwy C in the Town of Homestead.

Foraging

Gathering forest products, berries, mushrooms and other natural forage is an activity enjoyed by residents and visitors to Florence County.

Gathering firewood, selecting Christmas trees, and collecting nuts and other tree components such as pine cones, pine boughs, and colored leaves are popular trips to natural areas throughout the county.

Scenic Driving

Due to Florence County's abundance of forest and water resources and variety of landscapes, almost any federal, state, county, or town road can offer exceptional scenic views. The western portion of the county is heavily forested with rolling to hilly topography and small lakes and streams scattered throughout the countryside. The eastern towns are mostly forested with a scattering of farms. The land surface is level to moderately rolling, occasionally interrupted by rock outcrops and prominent glacial depositional features. Lakes, such as Lake Emily, are common throughout this area.



Streams and rivers have many scenic rapids and waterfalls as a result of increased gradients.

There is one designated auto tour, as well as one Rustic Road tour, advertised by Florence County in its visitors guide. The auto tour combines a mixture of the built and natural environment with opportunities to travel along major highways to visit historic sites and scenic overlooks, and forest roads to see waterfalls and areas such as Whisker Lake Wilderness Area and Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area.

Organized Sports

Participation in organized sports such as soccer, softball, and hardball are popular activities, particularly among the younger population. One soccer field, located at the County Fair Park, is available for use during the soccer season. Two temporary fields are also used, one in conjunction with the school in Florence and one in Aurora. Currently, over 200 youth participate in this activity during the summer months.

Four softball fields, one hardball field, and one T-ball little league field currently exist within the county. The softball fields are located in the towns of Aurora, Florence, Fence, and Long Lake. The field in Florence is part of the school complex. The Aurora field is used for little league. One hardball field exists in conjunction with school facilities in the Town of Florence. The little league field is located at Fisher Lake Park in the Town of Florence. The T-ball field is located next to the soccer field at the County Fair Park.

School Playgrounds

School playgrounds are located at the Florence school grounds, the former Aurora school grounds, and the former Long Lake school grounds. There is an 18-hole Frisbee Golf course located on the Florence School grounds, as well as several basketball hoops and one basketball court.



Water-based Recreation Resources

Surface Waters

Florence County's surface waters, including all lakes and streams consists of 8,758 acres, or approximately three percent of the county's area. There are 100 named lakes covering 6,597 acres and 165 unnamed lakes with 345 acres providing a total lake surface area of 6,941 acres. The largest natural lake is Halsey Lake covering 512 acres, while the Twin Falls Flowage encompasses over 900 acres. The deepest natural lake is Sea Lion with a maximum depth of 82 feet. Several flooded iron mines have depths over 100 feet with the deepest being 147 feet. Approximately 62 percent of the lakes within the county offer some form of public access.

There are 52 named and 113 unnamed streams and rivers covering a total area of 1,637 acres that flow within or border on Florence County. Also, there are 393 miles of rivers and streams within the county that have public frontage. Surface water locations are shown on Map 7.

Wild Rivers

The Pine and Popple rivers were designed by state statute in 1965 as Wild Rivers. The Wild Rivers concept maintains that these rivers are best preserved when they remain “free flowing” and protected from development. They offer flat water and fast water paddling opportunities, plus eight waterfalls and many rapids. These two rivers are Florence County’s least developed because the land in the watershed is largely devoted to timber production. Both rivers provide recreational activities such as tubing, canoeing, kayaking, and fishing. Public access locations for non-motorized watercraft are shown on Map 8.



Fishing

Florence County's lakes, rivers, and streams provide extensive resources for fishing. Sport fish species include brown, brook, and rainbow trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass, walleye, northern pike, panfish, and muskellunge. Many of the cold lakes and streams provide ideal habitat for trout. Brook and brown trout are found primarily in the streams, and rainbow trout is a species found in the lakes. Some trout streams include the Pine, Popple, South Branch Popple, Woods, Wisconsin Creek, Hendricks Creek, and Little Popple River.

Many of the warmer lakes in the county contain largemouth and smallmouth bass, northern pike and panfish. Walleye are probably the most sought after warm water fish in the county. Water bodies such as the Menominee River, Lower Brule River, Lower Pine River, Pine River Flowage, Brule River Flowage, Halsey Lake, Fay Lake, Long Lake, Frog Lake, and the Spread Eagle Chain provide good walleye populations.

Small Non-Motorized Activities

Canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and tubing enthusiasts have a variety of rivers and streams available to accommodate these activities. The diversity of rivers and streams the county has to offer can provide a recreational experience for the novice and the expert. The Pine, Popple, Brule, and Menominee Rivers are excellent for these activities. The county's major rivers for canoeing total approximately 120 miles. Numerous smaller lakes are also available for these activities. Although lakes may not offer the challenges and thrills of the county's rivers, they do provide a scenic, tranquil environment. The locations for these activities are shown on Map 8: Boat Public Access Locations.

Motorized Boating, Water and Jet Skiing

Florence County has several lakes suitable for motorized boating, water skiing, and jet skiing. The DNR general guideline for safe motorized water activities is if the water surface area is 200 acres or greater. Using these guidelines, seven lakes - Fay, Halsey, Keyes, Kingsford Flowage, Long, Patten, and Twin Falls Flowage – met these criteria. In addition, the Spread Eagle Chain of Lakes has a combined area of over 200 acres. Some of these lakes, however, have some limitations. Fay, Halsey, and Long Lakes have dense beds of floating and under water vegetation. There are stump fields in the Kingsford and Twin Falls Flowages making boating hazardous. The best fast boating and water skiing opportunities are on Keyes and Patten lakes and the Spread Eagle Chain.

The county addresses any conflicts between recreational interests and motorized boating, water skiing, and jet skiing enthusiasts and fishing, sailing, and other non-motorized forms of boating, and swimming enthusiasts. The conflicts can result from large wakes created by fast boating activities and operation of jet skis. Rivers in the county are generally too narrow or shallow for motorized boating. The Menominee River is the only exception offering adequate width and depth.

Swimming

Florence County has numerous lakes and rivers that offer swimming opportunities. Developed public beaches, approximately one acre in area, are available at Morgan, Keyes, Emily, Fisher, Long Lake, West Bass, and Vagabond Park. Changing or bathhouses are available to swimmers at Emily, Keyes, Fisher, and West Bass lakes. None of these lakes have lifeguards. There are also private beaches associated with lodges and resorts, especially at Spread Eagle, and undeveloped beaches on public lands throughout the county. Map 7 shows the areas with public, developed beaches.

Waterfall Tours

Florence County has eight waterfalls along the Pine and Popple rivers. These falls are LaSalle Falls, Washburn Falls, Little Bull Falls, Big Bull Falls, Jennings Falls, Bull Falls, Meyers Falls, and Breakwater Falls. Trails to these waterfalls vary in difficulty of accessibility, and a few require a high level of exertion and physical effort.

PARK ACCESSIBILITY

ADA Standards

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires that "reasonable accommodation" be made for the needs of the estimated one in five people in this country who are disabled. That is, all public and private goods and service providers and employers must remove all structural and communication barriers from facilities, or that they provide alternative access where feasible.

Guidelines for public structures such as restrooms, information centers, and other public and private buildings at those sites are available at the ADA.gov website. The site has design standards and compliance information.

The following are basic standards for accessibility that are recommended for accessibility to elements of recreational facilities:

- All **restroom facilities** should be accessible by persons with disabilities. Depending on the circumstances of the facility, it could require very little modification or an extensive renovation.
- At least one **picnic table** and one **grill** designed to accommodate persons in wheelchairs should be available at each park (if these types of facilities are not currently available).
- One in 25 **parking stalls** should be designated for disabled parking. These stalls should be the closest spaces to the park or facility entrance. The stall should have a direct route to the entrance; it is to be marked and adjacent to an access aisle of 60 inches, and must have an unobscured vertical sign that shows the universal symbol of accessibility. Slope of these spaces and aisles cannot exceed 1:50.

Firm, slip resistant, barrier-free **pathways** linking park facilities within each park are recommended. They should be at least 36 inches wide, with a 60 by 60 inch passing space or turnaround provided every 200 feet.

- Where **water fountains** are available, spouts should be no more than 36 inches above the finished floor. If the fountain is freestanding or built-in and does not have a clear space underneath, a clear floor space of 30 to 48 inches alongside the fountain for a parallel approach should be provided. A wall or post of at least 27 inches high by 17 to 19 inches deep by 30 inches wide should be provided. Controls should be located at the front edge of the fountain and operable with one hand without twisting the wrist.

Selected Assessment of Accessibility Needs

<i>Lake Emily County Park:</i>	-Difficult accessibility to restrooms (steep grassy incline)
<i>Keyes Lake County Park:</i>	-Steep grassy grade from bathrooms down to beach (no path) -Grab bars in bathrooms are approximately 28 inches off the floor (ADA requires 33 to 36 inches) -Toilet seat is approximately 14 inches above floor
<i>Fisher Lake County Park:</i>	-Inaccessible route to bathroom facilities for wheelchair (dirt path) -No grab bars in bathroom facilities
<i>West Bass Lake County Park:</i>	-No designated handicapped parking stall -No paved trail to bathrooms or to beach area
<i>Spread Eagle Public Landing:</i>	-No handrails in bathroom -Unpaved walkway to bathroom (dirt path)
<i>Lake of Dreams Public Landing:</i>	-No accessibility for wheelchair to toilet (grass path) -Bathroom doorway is too narrow and no grab bars -Half a foot step up to get in bathroom

Operation and Maintenance Needs

<i>Keyes Lake County Park:</i>	-No doors on men's and women's toilet stalls
<i>Fisher Lake County Park:</i>	-In need of basic repairs and maintenance to help beautify the park

ADA Compliance Deadlines

When the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed by Congress in 1992, structural changes to buildings were to be completed no later than January 26, 1995. Although many communities have not yet met the deadlines, efforts should be taken by Florence County to bring facilities into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Chapter 3: Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment

RECREATION NEEDS STANDARDS

One method to assess community recreation needs is the standards system. Standards that have been developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provide a scale against which an existing recreation system can be measured so that guidelines for future needs can be created.

The NRPA Standards link the number of facility units and acreages to the county's population. Variations in outdoor recreation environments throughout the nation, as well as the multiplicity of planning procedures do exist, so there is no single type of resource and facility guideline that can completely meet all outdoor recreation planning needs. Therefore, the long standing NRPA standard of 10 acres/1000 persons is recognized as a guide to be used with local and state plans along with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) prepared by the DNR.

NRPA Standards

The NRPA suggests that, at a minimum, a county park system be composed of 10 acres of developed recreation land per 1,000 population. Based on this standard, Florence County, with a population estimate of 4,423 in the year 2010, should provide at least 44 acres of recreation land. Not including Federal, State, local, or school district land, Florence County alone provides 37,290 acres of land for outdoor recreation. Florence County far exceeds the NRPA minimum standard for outdoor recreation.

SCORP Analysis

The report, *Outdoor Recreation in Wisconsin: The 2011-2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*, provides an analysis by the DNR of the recreation facility/activity priorities for the state, identifies primary issues, and establishes funding criteria.

In Wisconsin, land resource based activities have increased just over 27 percent over a 10-year period. Much of this increase has been in the areas of wildlife viewing and off-road driving, both relatively inactive activities. While not generally popular among older participants, the biggest change in recreation participation has been in the area of snow and ice based activities. Much of this change may be attributed to recent advancements in equipment technology, as well as an increased interest in snowboarding and ice skating.

Recreation projections can be examined in two ways. The first is simply participation as a numerical total. For the vast majority of recreation activities, this number will increase as the state's population does. To gauge a more accurate view of future participation, it is far more useful to examine a given activity's participation rate as a percentage of the total population. This number gives a better understanding of population growth vs. participation change in an activity. Statewide projections are made for a five-year period, thus reflecting the most pressing demands on recreation in the near future. Some of these activities such as ATVing, RV camping, and geocaching are expected to grow in popularity. Other activities such as swimming, day hiking, and fishing, are expected to remain stable in their popularity, while others – jet skiing, mountain biking, etc. – are expected to decrease in popularity.

Table 3.1: Projected Trends in Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Activities, 2011-2016

Increasing in Demand	
Adventure racing	Popular for individual and groups
Driving for pleasure	An easy activity for the aging baby boomer generation
Developed/RV camping	Baby boomers are drivers for this growth
Kayaking	Cheaper entry points have attracted participants
Visit a dog park	Urban residents continue to demand these parks
Soccer outdoors	Youth growth is strong in urban areas
BMX biking	X games popularity may be a driving factor in growth
Climbing	Indoor climbing walls have led to outdoor resurgence
Paddle boarding	Fast growing water sport
Triathlon	Varying distance events have allowed for growth
Off highway vehicle driving	Post-recession growth continues
Gardening for pleasure	Grow local concept taking hold

Stable in Demand	
Walk for pleasure	Market saturation does not allow for growth
Running/jogging	Gen Y replacing baby boomers in this activity
Water parks	Recession may have caused this to slow
Motorized boating	Still easy access in a water based state
Day hiking	Popular with many generations
Golf	Time constraints do not allow for growth
Tent camping	Stable but growth is illusive
Trail running	Stable niche
View/photograph wildlife	Easy activity spanning generations
Bicycling	Popular spanning generations – access is key
Snowshoeing	After large growth, has stabilized

Decreasing in Demand	
Hunting	Continues to struggle with generational loss, access
Inline skating	Large decrease in last 6 years, bottom may be near
Skateboard/skate parks	Younger generation is free skating with long boards

Horseback riding on trails	Recession impacts have caused a decrease with no rebound
Softball	Older generation (boomers) continue to leave the sport
Downhill skiing	Younger generation numbers can't replace aging boomers

Source: DNR, 2011-2016 SCORP, and Bay-Lake RPC.

Statewide Recreation Goals

In addition to facility/activity priorities for the state, the SCORP identified eight statewide goals and associated actions for recreation enthusiasts, planners, providers, and the general public in the future and include:

Goal 1: Assess, understand, and adapt to growing recreation tourism demands and preferences.

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Understand the recreation and tourism preferences associated with growing market segments.
2. Identify existing and emerging strategies to evaluate appropriate levels and types of service for expanding user groups.
3. Hold an annual forum on outdoor recreation as part of the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism.
4. Continue collaborations between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism, as well as other partners to promote outdoor recreation.
5. Continue to promote and expand the Travel Green Wisconsin program for business connections to the outdoors.
6. Maintain funding for tourism marketing to promote high quality outdoor recreation experiences.
7. Acknowledge the potential issues surrounding climate change adaptation with outdoor recreation and tourism.

Goal 2: Improve integration of outdoor recreation interests and needs in land use and other relevant planning efforts

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Support outdoor recreation access and opportunities on public lands by establishing a State Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation.
2. Support and align state agency programs and initiatives to promote the creation, expansion, and enhancement of urban parks and community green spaces.
3. Provide for expansion of the following trail systems: hiking, biking, horse, and water.
4. Manage state lands and waters within a larger landscape context to conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health.
5. Encourage regional planning efforts for integrated, cost-effective use of recreation lands and facilities.

6. Provide education and awareness of how recreation uses can impact the natural resources along with actions to reduce those impacts.
7. Promote the collaboration of public and private recreation opportunities through integrated management planning.

Goal 3: Continue to provide and enhance public access to Wisconsin recreational lands and waters

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Continue to develop a statewide interactive mapping system showing all public lands and water access points within the state.
2. Continue to acquire and develop boating access sites to meet public boating needs.
3. Promote awareness of the location of existing recreation lands, facilities, and opportunities available within a given region.
4. Continue to meet Americans with the Disabilities Act standards for accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities.
5. Support community based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation.
6. Promote sustainable recreation facility design, construction, and maintenance practices.

Goal 4: Conserve rural landscapes and forests through partnerships and incentives

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Support financial and other incentives that increase access to outdoor recreation activities on or across private lands.
2. Encourage large-scale land conservation partnership projects through economic incentives and technical assistance.
3. Support collaborative landscape conservation through competitive processes, including increases in Land and Water Conservation Fund, stewardship funding, and other programs.
4. Continue to support the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative for habitat conservation and protection.

Goal 5: Address funding challenges associated with managing Wisconsin outdoor recreation resources

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Encourage all local governments to develop park and recreation plans for participation in state and federal cost share programs.
2. Provide more cost share opportunities for local governments to develop and maintain recreational lands and facilities.
3. Provide adequate funding to the Wisconsin State Park System to meet the needs of its 14 million visitors a year.

4. Explore new and innovative funding methods for outdoor park and recreation facilities. These methods may include public/private partnerships or cost sharing among many governmental agencies.
5. Increase revenue generating capabilities for outdoor recreation by continuing to update and improve technologies such as automated fee collection systems.
6. Increase the capacity of public lands friends groups to provide and support recreation facilities.

Goal 6: Promote outdoor recreation as a means of improving public health among Wisconsinites

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Develop a “Get Fit with Wisconsin Campaign” for public lands and waters that touts the health benefits of using recreational areas and reaches a wide audience of potential users.
2. Educate the public about the health benefits of moderate and enjoyable physical activities such as walking, biking, and nature study.
3. Integrate opportunities and incentives for exercise during the workday—give employees 30 minutes a day for exercise, and provide exercise equipment.
4. Start a dialogue between public outdoor recreation providers and health agencies to identify other (non-traditional) funding sources for recreational facilities and development.
5. Continue the “Walk with Walker Program” by encouraging citizens to use state parks, forests, and trails for health and wellness.
6. Promote the mission of the "Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health" on informing, promoting and encouraging citizens of Wisconsin to incorporate healthy eating and physical behaviors for a lifetime.

Goal 7: Establish great urban parks and community green spaces

Actions and Recommendations:

1. Create and enhance a new generation of safe, clean, accessible, and connected great urban parks and community green spaces.
2. Connect people with urban parks, trails, and community green spaces.
3. Target technical assistance support to communities as they create and enhance urban parks and community green spaces.
4. Continue to provide funding to communities through the Stewardship Program to acquire and develop local park and greenway spaces.
5. Leverage private community foundations and public funding to increase park acquisitions.
6. Provide funding to restore, preserve, and protect historic outdoor facilities for future generations.

Summary of Recreation Analysis and Needs Identified

A review of the NRPA standards, the Wisconsin 2011-2016 SCORP was undertaken to identify needs for this Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update. The NRPA standards suggest that 10 acres of recreation land be provided for every 1,000 residents. Florence County provides a total of 37,290 acres for outdoor recreation. With an estimated 2010 population of 4,423 residents, the county should have at least 44 acres available for outdoor recreation. Florence County far exceeds this requirement.

Florence County offers many of the outdoor recreation opportunities that the 2011-2016 SCORP finds to be growing in popularity, or remaining stable as the population shifts in age. These activities include RV camping, bird viewing, motorized boating, driving for pleasure, picnicking, wildlife viewing and photography, kayaking, paddle boarding, snowshoeing, off-road biking, and walking. These activities can be enjoyed alone or in groups. Given the amount of public lands available for these activities, Florence County is well suited to meet these recreation needs.

Conclusion

There is 140,052 acres (44 percent of total land area) of Florence County land available for public use. Based on the NRPA standards discussed above, the focus for outdoor recreation in Florence County needs to be on improvements to existing facilities for high quality, year-round recreational experiences. Therefore, general recreational needs are identified below:

- Park improvements; particularly boat ramps, toilets, parking, signs, ball diamonds, soccer fields, and ADA accessibility improvements.
- Trail improvements, both motorized and non-motorized, for summer and winter activities, including trail connections to Aurora from Florence, and permanent trail relocations (using public lands as much as possible)
- Modernize campgrounds with electric and water hook-ups, and dumping stations.

More specific needs and potential park and recreation improvements are included in Chapter 4, Outdoor Recreation Recommendations, and in Chapter 5 where Capital Improvements are identified.

Chapter 4: Outdoor Recreation Recommendations

Introduction

The recommendations set forth in this chapter include an examination of NRPA standards, a review of the 2011-2016 SCORP, and public input received for this county CORP update. NRPA standards represent an analysis of outdoor recreation facilities and programs and an allocation of facilities and acreages based on population.

General Recommendations

Provision for and maintenance of public parks is a benefit to Florence County residents and visitors. It enhances the quality of life, provides health benefits, and allows for access to public lands for residents and visitors. Below are general recommendations to serve as guidelines for the county's role in providing outdoor recreation activities.

- It is recommended that periodic evaluations of recreation programs are undertaken. The evaluation should consider efficiencies, duplication, private sector offerings, and program participation levels. It is in the county and communities best interests to not compete with the provision of recreation activities. The county should initiate the evaluation process.
- All levels of government should pursue a policy of protecting areas of significant scenic, cultural, and historical value, as well as important wildlife areas.
- An outdoor recreation plan must guide the protection of area's open space and landscape. Because of the quality of Florence County's natural resources, the protection of these resources is a priority.

In terms of park development, the following basic facilities and services should be included:

1. ADA accessibility
2. Trash and recycling cans, when feasible
3. Adequate parking facilities
4. Adequate signage
5. Identification of park entrance and in more populated areas, park boundaries (signage)
6. Pleasure walking and/or hiking trails, where practical
7. Development of areas providing water-associated activities
8. Development of areas providing a variety of activities

In addition, Florence County should work with different user groups to provide creative and cost effective solutions for multiple recreational activities competing for the same limited resources. Some of these examples include competition for water resources by jet ski operators, anglers, and canoeists; ATV operators and horseback riders using the same forest roadways; snowshoers and snowmobilers using the same forest areas; and mountain bikers and hikers using the same trails.

Individual Park Recommendations:

County Fair Park

County Fair Park is an important part of the recreation activities in Florence County. Efforts should be made to utilize the grounds as efficiently as possible.

- It is recommended that the county consider the replacement and extension of water lines throughout the grounds. Additionally, electricity should be extended to outlying areas.
- Improving the primitive camping sites on west-central edge of grounds.
- The grounds should be made ADA accessible, including pathways throughout the grounds.
- Population projections indicate that the youth population will remain stable for those most likely to play organized sports. Furthermore, the SCORP has indicated that soccer will remain very popular as an organized sport. It is recommended that the soccer field be maintained, and perhaps accessory needs for the field in this area of County Fair Park be maintained and expanded if demand warrants it. This recommendation also applies to the softball and baseball fields.

Campgrounds

The SCORP indicated that RV and developed camping is growing in demand statewide, while tent camping is stable. Primitive camping opportunities appear to be adequate to meet present and future demand as this type of camping is not restricted on county or national forest lands within the county. Maintenance and repairs to National Forest campgrounds will continue but the Forest Service has no plans to expand capacity or expand utility services.

There is a private campground, west of Florence named, “Camping in the Clouds” and one at Keyes Lake named, Keyes Lake Campground. Both private campground continue to add sites and cabins.

- The county is experiencing high demand at the Lake Emily campground, and West Bass Lake campground is also getting busier. Consideration is being given to expanding the Lake Emily campground. Florence County is exploring building “mini” cabins in this location and considering the possibility of this option at Fischer and West Bass lakes too.

In conjunction with this effort, the county should consider pursuing partnerships with the private sector as a source for developing campgrounds.

Day Use Areas: Picnic and Short-term Recreation Sites

Hiking, walking for pleasure, and viewing wildlife are just a few popular activities that day use areas offer with their locations all over the county. These are SCORP-identified recreational activities that are in demand, and day use areas support them. Investing in day use facilities serves as a recreational multiplier.

- There is a need to maintain day use areas and add picnic tables and accessories. There is a demand and a replacement cycle for these recreation areas.
- A pavilion has been constructed at West Bass Lake Park. There still remains a need for pavilions to be added to Vagabond Park, Fisher Lake Park, and Keyes Peak Ski Hill to accommodate large gatherings and to serve as a shelter during inclement weather.

- There is a desire to develop trails and viewing areas along the Pine River and make connections between current trails to waterfalls and other water features along the Pine River Flowage and downstream.

Wild Rivers Interpretive Center

The operators of the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center foresee the need for the following improvements at the center to better serve the public:

- Continue working on the exhibits.
- Install a modern wayside facility located at the center to replace the one removed by WisDOT in 2000.
- Maintain the three-quarter mile Nature Trail around the center.
- Design and construct a trail linking the center and the Florence Town Hall.
- Design and construct a research pond for public enjoyment and education outside the center.
- Maintain trail surfaces.

Florence County School Forest

An action plan guides the development of the Florence County School Forest. The advisory team for the action plan consists of a school board member, teachers, parents, students, and a DNR forester.

- The action plan calls for trails, parking areas, a challenge initiative course, trail guide brochure, and a wetland observation deck. These action items are being pursued as funds become available.

Golf and Tennis

The SCORP indicates that the demand for golf will remain. The time it takes to play golf does constrain its rate of growth, however.

- The county is encouraging the development of a private golf course; currently there is no operational course. The county has identified a golf course as a high priority for a recreational option to have available in Florence County.
- Maintain existing facilities.

Horseback Riding

This activity is forecasted to remain stable or decrease in popularity statewide. The availability of scenic terrain and trails in Florence County contributes to horseback riding's popularity in the county. Halls Creek and Bush Lake Flats equestrian trails are marked with different colored loops. There are picnic tables, fire rings, and hitching posts available. Maps can be found online or at the kiosk boards at the trailhead.

- The addition of a hand water pump is recommended at the Halls Creek trail location.

Hiking/Nature Trails

There are numerous opportunities for hiking and pleasure walking along designated trails and along low volume forest roads in Florence County. Trails are very popular and competition for trail space between motorized and non-motorized recreation activities can reach high levels.

- Florence County trail information is available on the county tourism website.
- Better public access to the county's waterfalls continues to be a high priority for the county. There are issues to be addressed concerning the management of the Wild Rivers property in order to pursue these trails. Some of these trails require significant physical effort to reach waterfall locations and improved trail access would increase viewing opportunities for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with mobility issues.

Bicycling and Mountain Biking

Because of the large number of low traffic volume roadways that exist in the county, it would appear that the current supply of on-road bicycling areas exceeds demand. However, roadways are not marked or specifically designated as a bicycle route.

The SCORP has indicated that bicycling on and off road is popular with many generations.

- It is recommended that the county consider adding signage and designation of bicycle routes.
- It is recommended that the county continue to consider linking existing trails.

ATV Trails

ATV riding and their associated trails merit special attention. It is necessary to foster cooperation between ATV clubs and riders, the state, the National Forest, the county, the towns, and private landowners to successfully plan for this activity. The volume of trail usage is high for all motorized and non-motorized user groups.

- It is recommended that the county pursue a link in the northern portion of the county to provide an ATV crossing over the Pine River. There are constraints to this recommendation due to the Wild Rivers property and the USFS Whisker Lake Wilderness Area, but the goal does remain to pursue this trail connection.
- The county will continue to pursue linkages to surrounding counties and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.
- There is a need to maintain and enhance access to businesses and communities in the county, particularly Aurora.

Snowmobiling

The need appears to be satisfied within Florence County by the existing system of state-funded and club trails. Improvements in trail connections could be made in the Town of Fence where the trail runs along plowed roads, rather than trails.

- The maintenance program conducted by the Snowmobile Club is well done for trails and will continue for this activity. Small reroute issues that may arise will be addressed, as needed.
- The county will continue to maintain and pursue trail linkages.

Snow Skiing

The SCORP shows that downhill skiing participation levels may decline as the numbers of young skiers cannot replace the older baby boomers before them. Data on cross country skiing demand is not available, but these trails can still provide good hiking/foot path opportunities in the summer months.

Keyes Peak offers skiing in the winter.

- An alternate lift system for those unable to use the current rope tow system is needed.
- The maintenance of existing cross country skiing trails in Florence County appears to be meeting demand of the system. The county does not anticipate expanding these trails.
- Adding signage is recommended to increase public awareness of existing trail facilities.

Disc Golf

Keyes Peak offers disc golf in the summer, and there is a course on the Florence School grounds.

Hunting and Trapping

The abundance of public and private lands open to public hunting appears to be adequate to satisfy this demand. Statewide information indicates that participation in hunting is declining over time.

Shooting Range

Rifle ranges provide an area to learn the skills for hunting. Florence County has a public shooting range that is available to use at no cost. The cooperative development of shooting ranges for all types of activities including shotgun, rifle, archery, 3-D, and clay target shooting should be explored between the county, DNR, and local rod and gun clubs. There is a club trap range in Long Lake.

Scenic Driving

Driving for pleasure as a recreational activity is expected to increase as a significant portion of the county population ages. Florence County has a Rustic Road, R-74, located in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. It crosses the Popple River, a Wisconsin “Wild River.” It is also near Morgan Lake Campground, a National Forest and semi-wild campground.

The county could publicize this route and other routes for Wisconsin Auto Tours or on websites to inform the public of the existing opportunities for scenic driving.

Organized Sports

Population forecasts for Florence County youth indicate that ages five to 24, which are most likely to participate in organized sports, will remain stable through 2040. This indicates that facilities for supporting organized sports should be maintained, and additional investments should be pursued where possible.

- Soccer is a growing sport in demand and popularity. Fields, lighting, restrooms, bleachers, scoreboards, and accessibility should be improved/maintained.
- Development of better facilities in the form of improved fencing and dugouts are needed at most baseball/softball fields.
- Support facilities including lighting, restrooms, parking facilities, and bleacher seating should also be developed or improved at these recreation areas.

Playgrounds

Florence County School District playgrounds were expanded, in some locations, five years ago. It was determined that improvements would be based on the condition of the sites over time. School playground areas have been evaluated over the five-year planning period.

- There is a need to provide playground equipment at Lake Emily, Fisher Lake, Vagabond Park, and West Bass Lake.

Fishing

Florence County's lakes, rivers, and streams provide ample resources for this activity. Increased use of water resources for fishing related activities has resulted in a need for improved boat launches and supporting facilities such as parking. Development of public access on all lakes should be pursued whenever feasible.

- The ADA fishing pier located in the Town of Florence has parking, but there is a need for other amenities such as picnic tables, restroom facilities, and trash cans.
- In stream restoration on the Pine and Popple rivers would greatly improve fishing opportunities for the public.

Boating and Related Activities

Canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, tubing, and related activities are expected to increase in popularity. Given the water resources in Florence County, increasing public awareness about entry, portage locations, and the degree of difficulty along the river or stream would be beneficial. Providing information, signage, better access, and parking are important to allow safe, public use of the Wild Rivers and other water bodies.

- Continue with a signage program on land to warn participants of dangerous rapids and waterfalls. This will require the continued coordination with the Wisconsin DNR due to various landowners along the Pine and Popple Wild Rivers.
- Improve accessibility via paved parking lots to minimize erosion at put in and take out points.
- The county is working with the DNR to allow camping along the Wild Rivers, as the USFS and county currently offer.

Motorized Boating, Waterskiing, Jet Skiing

Education and increased awareness for competing interests on the lakes and waterways of Florence County are addressed on an as needed basis. Improvements at all boat launches should be pursued and funding assistance sought, where possible.

Swimming

Swimming is a highly popular activity in Florence County due to the abundance of available water resources. It is expected to remain a popular recreational activity.

- Maintaining and upgrading current beaches is an ongoing part of the county's recreation program.
- An additional public swimming beach located in the Spread Eagle area and in Aurora remains a goal for the county's public swimming resources.

Accessibility - Land and Water Based Activities

Incorporation of ADA specifications to help eliminate and reduce participation barriers (i.e. restrooms, foot paths, access ramps, camping pads) should be included in all new facility improvement and development plan designs.

Chapter 5: Implementation

RECREATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS, 2019-2023

Capital improvements are non-routine improvements or new additions to a facility that would improve the overall value and usefulness. For example, remodeling a restroom to meet ADA standards or buying new playground equipment are capital improvements. Planning for capital improvements allow for a more effective allocation of budget resources and recreation planning for Florence County.

Below is a list of capital improvements by park for county, state-owned, and town-owned recreation sites.

Florence County Recreation Sites

County Fair Park

- Driveway expansion and widening of both gates
- Improvements to the roof of the exhibit building
- Arena improvements for the horse pull
- Evaluate improvements needed for arena seating
- Landscaping plan
- Future extension for water, power and public announcement system
- Evaluate improvements needed for rustic camping areas
- Implement improvements needed for arena
- Begin implementing the landscaping plan
- ADA pathways and parking
- Bandstand
- Construct south end restroom

Wild Rivers Interpretive Center

- Complete the remaining exhibits
- Install a modern wayside facility
- Maintain the Interpretive Nature Trail
- Trail connections to downtown Florence
- Develop an outdoor Environmental Education Classroom
- Construct the wildlife and songbird habitat interpretive area
- Construct the research pond

Florence County School Forest

- Develop Site Inventory Plan
- Develop and construct trail plan
- Develop and construct orienteering course

- Develop and construct challenge course
- Construct parking areas
- Develop trail brochure and corresponding marker posts and interpretive signs
- Construct amphitheater and seating

Fisher Lake Park

- Construct new pavilion
- Landscaping
- Lighting of baseball field
- Construct mini-cabins on Fisher Lake
- Add beach signage
- Provide screening on wooded side of volleyball court

Keyes Lake Recreation Area

- Pavement replacement on ramp
- Construct pavilion adjacent to lodge
- New lighting
- New tow
- Develop a cross country ski trailhead
- Develop a mountain bike trailhead
- Add playground equipment
- Landscaping
- Add beach signage

Vagabond Park

- Construct pavilion
- Make beach improvements and signage
- Repair bridge for pedestrian and biking use
- Install playground equipment
- Install bleachers for ski show

Spread Eagle North Lake Boat Landing

- Reconstruct boat landing ramp

Lake Emily Park

- Expand campground
- Install additional playground equipment
- Construct mini-cabins

- Add beach signage
- Widen Lake Emily Ski Trail to accommodate skate skiers

West Bass Lake Park

- Install additional playground equipment
- Reconstruct retaining wall around beach area
- Construct mini-cabins on the lake
- Add beach signage

Halls Creek Flowage

- Plant wild rice/upland grasses
- Horse trailhead Improvements

LaSalle Falls Walking Trail

- Improve trail on DNR lands
- Improve signage
- Widen trail
- Build steps on steep slopes of trail
- Cover exposed roots on the trail

Sea Lion Lake Boat Landing

- No capital improvements planned, as it received updates in 2015.

Seidel Lake Boat Landing

- Construct new dock

Patten Lake Boat Landing

- Reconstruct boat landing and pads

Loon Lake Walk-In Access

- Add signage

Brule River Canoe Access

- Add signage
- Improve trail and parking

Pine and Popple Wild Rivers

- Develop hunter/walking trails
- Improve signage

- Construct access points to Meyers and Bull Falls, and Goodman grade
- Construct access points to Dorothy, Robago, Mud, and Savage Lakes
- Connect trails for hiking, biking, and ATVs

Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area

- Complete seasonal campsites on Frog Lake and Roaches Land units
- Complete campground east of Sand Lake

Montgomery Lake Boat Landing

- Work with state to make improvements so it is useable by the public

Lake Edith

- Maintain current boat access
- Possibly build mini-cabins

Porcupine Lake

- Develop boat access

Lake of Dreams

- No capital improvements planned

Price Lake

- Purchase public landing
- Develop public landing

Bessie-Babbitt Lake

- Purchase public access
- Develop public access

Nicolet Trail

- No improvements outside of maintenance on the grade. Grading from Tucker Road to Wisconsin Creek Road.
- Add a trailhead sign on Highway 70

Town Recreation Sites

Town of Aurora

Menominee River Boat Landing

- Install picnic tables
- Install grills

- Add new dock and repair the old one
- Install a new culvert
- Improve lighting

Fisher Lake Boat Landing

- Fill in landing area
- Add gravel
- Remove brush
- Install picnic tables
- Install a permanent grill
- Construct a new fishing pier
- Improve lighting
- Construct outdoor toilet
- Create/improve beach

Town Recreation Area

- Add chain link fence around blacktop
- Paint divider lines in the parking area
- Install basketball hoops/courts
- Develop tennis courts
- Develop skateboard ramps
- Create a walking/jogging track
- Develop a kickball area
- Haul in large rock as divider between park and road
- Develop roller blade area
- Extend waterline to skating rink facility
- Develop an additional soccer field
- Develop a cross country ski trail

Town of Commonwealth

- No capital improvements planned

Town of Fence

- Add ball park area
- Purchase land for more parking
- Extend roads
- Pave roads and parking lot (paint divider lines)
- Develop volleyball court

- Expand the pavilion

Town of Fern

- Purchase and develop the Price Lake boat landing

Town of Florence

Florence Utilities Property

- Develop walking trails (Crossroads Trail Project)

Fisher Lake Pier Fishing

- Add picnic tables

Town of Homestead

Bush Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite

- Landscaping
- Improve boat landing
- Improve fire pit

East Bass Lake Boat Landing

- Improve shoreline and piers

East Bass Lake Park / Rustic Campsite

- Add landscaping
- Improve fire pit

Mirror Lake Boat Landing

- Improve boat landing

Scout Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite

- Add landscaping
- Improve boat landing

Sand Lake Boat Landing/Town Park/Rustic Campsite

- Improve boat landing

Town of Long Lake

Town Park

- Install horseshoe pits
- Add additional bleachers
- Construct a unisex, ADA accessible toilet
- Add more playground equipment

Long Lake Beach

- Add markers and buoys for swimming area
- Add ADA accessible walking trail from beach to boat landing
- Add new picnic tables

Long Lake Boat Landing

- Rebuild boat ramp

Fay Lake Boat Landing

- Rebuild boat ramp

Town of Tipler

- No capital improvements planned

FUNDING PROGRAMS

Funding for recreational development can come from a number of sources both public and private. Most funding for this type of development comes from public local funds.

Primarily, local funds come from a number of sources including the sale of bonds, allocations from the local tax base, and donations from individuals and organizations.

Non-local funding can come from a number of sources, either in the form of a grant or a loan. Currently, the DNR, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, and Rural Development (RDA) provide competitive funding relating to outdoor recreation.

The Wisconsin Waterways Commission is a good source of funding for acquiring and improving those amenities that primarily benefit recreational boaters in the state. Boat ramps, launches, parking lots, restrooms, and other boating related improvements can be 50% funded under this quarterly grant program administered by the WDNR.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is probably the main source of funds for outdoor recreation facilities. The Stewardship Program, administered by the DNR, is a fund designed to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, protect land sensitive to environmental degradation, conserve and restore wildlife habitat and protect water quality. As a prerequisite to the following WDNR funding programs, applicants must first submit a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan, such as this plan, or a master plan that has been approved by resolution by a local governing unit, or a plan of a higher unit of government. Applicants submitting qualifying comprehensive outdoor recreation plans or master plans may receive eligibility to apply for funding for up to five years. The DNR's priority for funding is land acquisition, followed by facility development.

Outdoor recreation grant programs currently administered by the DNR include:

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Program

The ATV program provides funds to accommodate all-terrain vehicles through the acquisition, insurance, development, and maintenance of all-terrain vehicle trails and areas, including routes.

ATV Enforcement Patrol

The ATV Enforcement Patrol provides grants to county sheriffs for all-terrain vehicle patrols.

County Conservation Aids

The County Conservation Aids provide funds to counties or recognized Indian tribes to carry out fish or wildlife management projects that enhance fish and wildlife habitat or fishing and hunting opportunities.

Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration

The Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration provides funding for sport fish restoration and boating access including the construction of boat landings and fishing piers.

Recreational Boating Facilities Program

The Recreational Boating Facilities program provides funds to local units of government and qualified lake associations for the construction of capital improvements to provide safe recreational boating facilities. The program also provides financial assistance for feasibility studies related to the development of safe recreational boating facilities, purchase of aquatic weed harvesting equipment, purchase of navigation aids, dredging of channels of waterways, and chemical treatment of Eurasian water milfoil.

Recreational Trails Program

The Recreation Trails Program provides funds for motorized and non-motorized recreation trail rehabilitation, trail maintenance, trail development, and trail acquisition.

Snowmobile Trail Aids

Snowmobile Trail Aids provide funds to maintain trail systems that provide passage through a county and connections with adjacent counties.

County Snowmobile Enforcement Patrols

County Snowmobile Enforcement Patrols provide funds for county snowmobile patrols functioning as a law enforcement unit for the enforcement of Ch. 350, Wis. Stats.

Stewardship Local Assistance - Acquisition and Development of Local Parks

Stewardship Local Assistance - Acquisition and Development of Local Parks provides funding to acquire land, rights in land, and develop public outdoor recreation areas for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes.

Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Rivers

Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Rivers provides funds for the acquisition of land in urban areas. Projects focus on providing access for the greatest number of potential users, and providing the greatest opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation.

Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Greenspace

Stewardship Local Assistance - Urban Greenspace provides funds for the acquisition of land in and around urban areas. Projects focus on providing access for the greatest number of potential users, and providing the greatest opportunities for nature-based outdoor recreation.

Stewardship Local Assistance - Acquisition of Development Rights

Stewardship Local Assistance - Acquisition of Development Rights provides funding for the acquisition of development rights that provide or enhance nature-based outdoor recreation areas. Projects must be part of an approved Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The LWCF provides financial assistance to state agencies, counties, villages, towns, school districts, cities, and Indian tribes for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program provides up to 50 percent reimbursement grants for approved state and local projects. Competition for LWCF funds is on a statewide basis.

Rural Development Administration (USDA - Rural Development) (RDA)

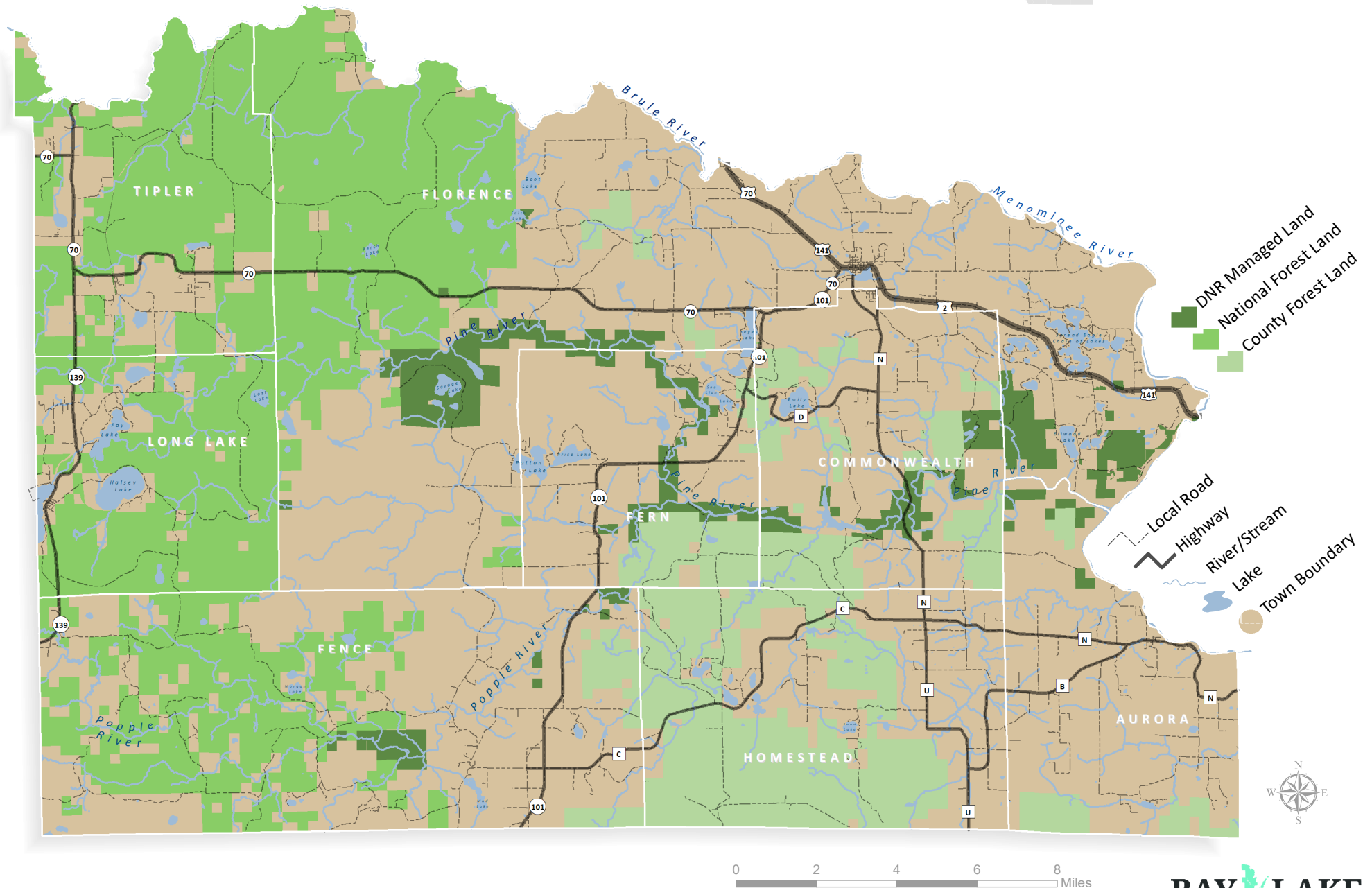
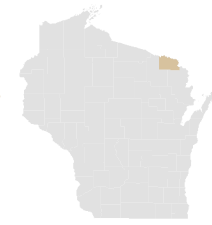
The RDA provides a loan program, which provides Community Facility Project Loans to applicants with areas of less than 20,000 people, for the purpose of constructing, enlarging, or improving community facilities for health care, public safety, or public services. These loans should be secured with bonds or notes pledging taxes, assessments, or revenues.

Land Ownership

Map 2

Florence County

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; WDNR, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

Disclaimer: This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. Bay-Lake RPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained. Sept. 2018

Map 3

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update

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- This map displays the geographical layout of Florence County, Wisconsin, and its surrounding areas. The towns shown include Tipler, Florence, Long Lake, Fence, Fern, Commonwealth, Aurora, and Homestead. Major water bodies such as the Brule River, Menominee River, Pine River, and Popple River are depicted. The map also identifies various parks and recreational areas, including Loon Lake Park, Popple River Park, Vagabond Park, West Bass Lake Park, and several disc golf courses. A legend in the top right corner provides symbols for local roads, highways, rivers/streams, lakes, and town boundaries. A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner.
- Legend:**
- Local Road
 - Highway
 - River/Stream
 - Lake
 - Town Boundary
- Parks and Recreational Areas:**
- 6. Loon Lake Park
 - 7. Popple River Park
 - 8. Vagabond Park
 - 9. West Bass Lake Park
 - Disc Golf:
 - 10. Florence Disc Golf Course
 - 11. Keyes Lake Park
 - Shooting Range:
 - 12. Florence County Range



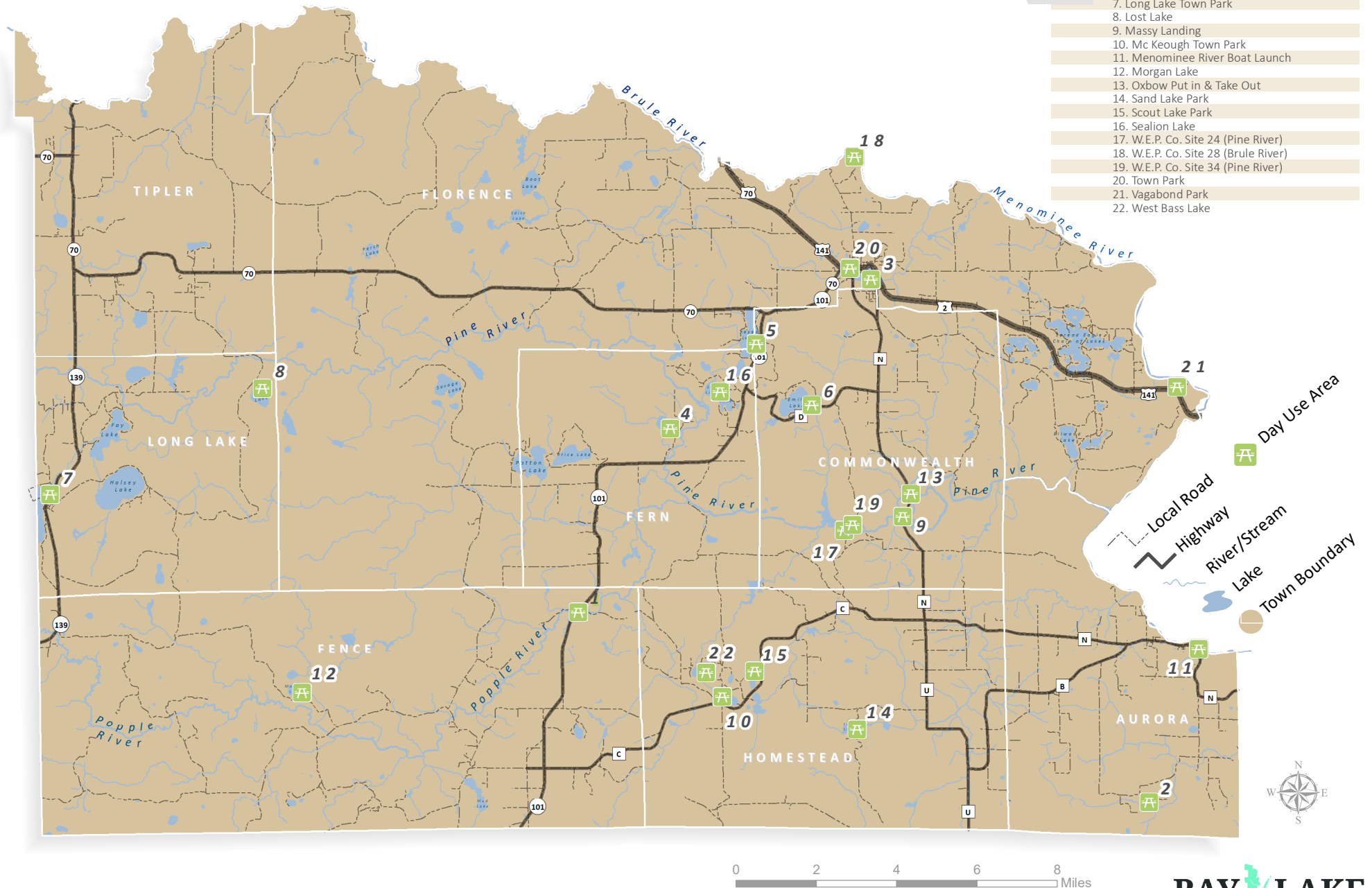
Day Use Areas

Florence County

Map 4

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update

1. HWY 101/Popple River Wayside
2. Fischer Lake Park
3. Fisher Lake Park
4. Kenneth L. Thompson Memorial (Siedel Lake)
5. Keyes Lake Park
6. Lake Emily
7. Long Lake Town Park
8. Lost Lake
9. Massy Landing
10. Mc Keough Town Park
11. Menominee River Boat Launch
12. Morgan Lake
13. Oxbow Put in & Take Out
14. Sand Lake Park
15. Scout Lake Park
16. Sealion Lake
17. W.E.P. Co. Site 24 (Pine River)
18. W.E.P. Co. Site 28 (Brule River)
19. W.E.P. Co. Site 34 (Pine River)
20. Town Park
21. Vagabond Park
22. West Bass Lake



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

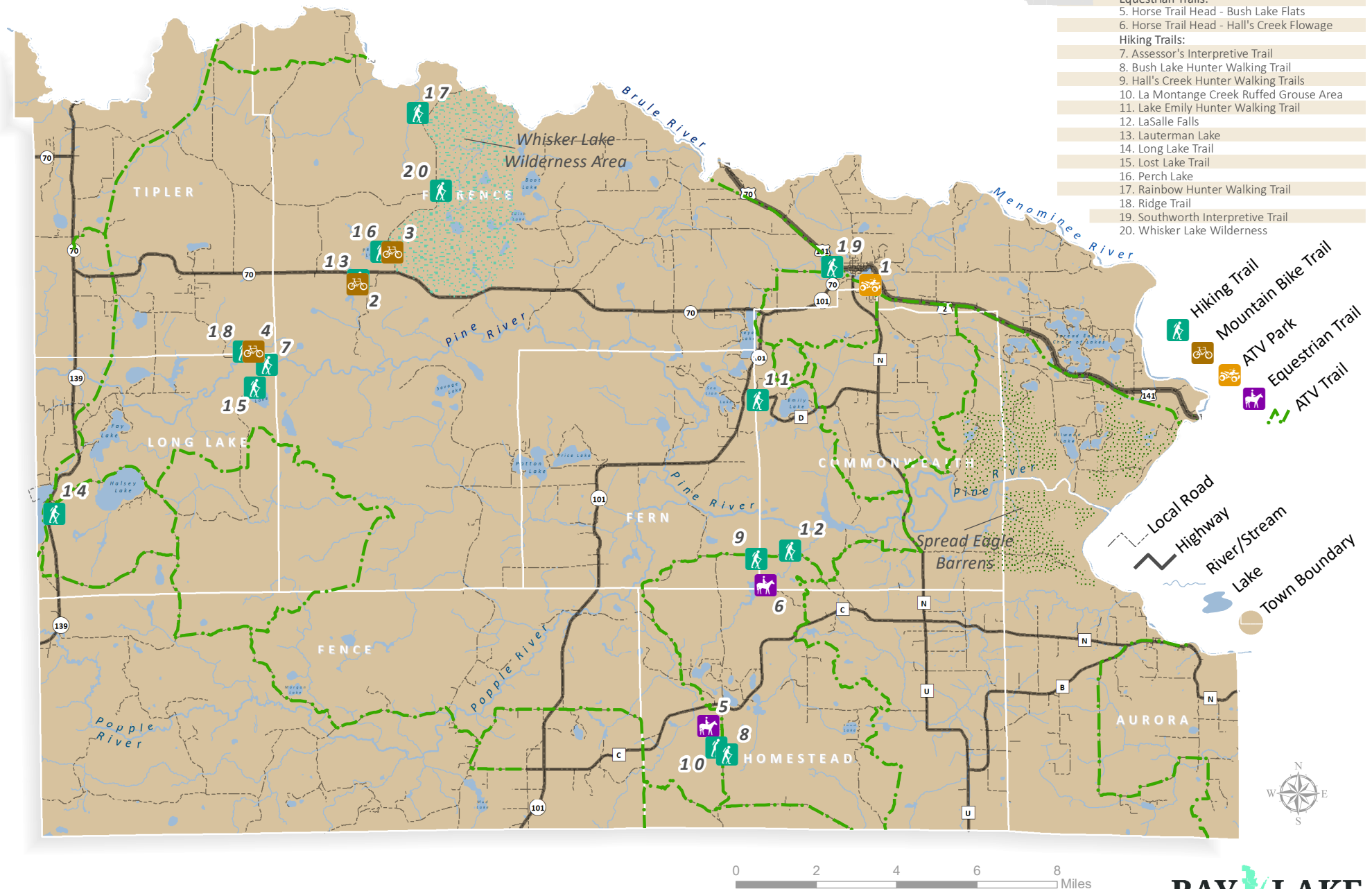
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Summer Activity Trails/Natural Areas

Florence County

Map 5

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update



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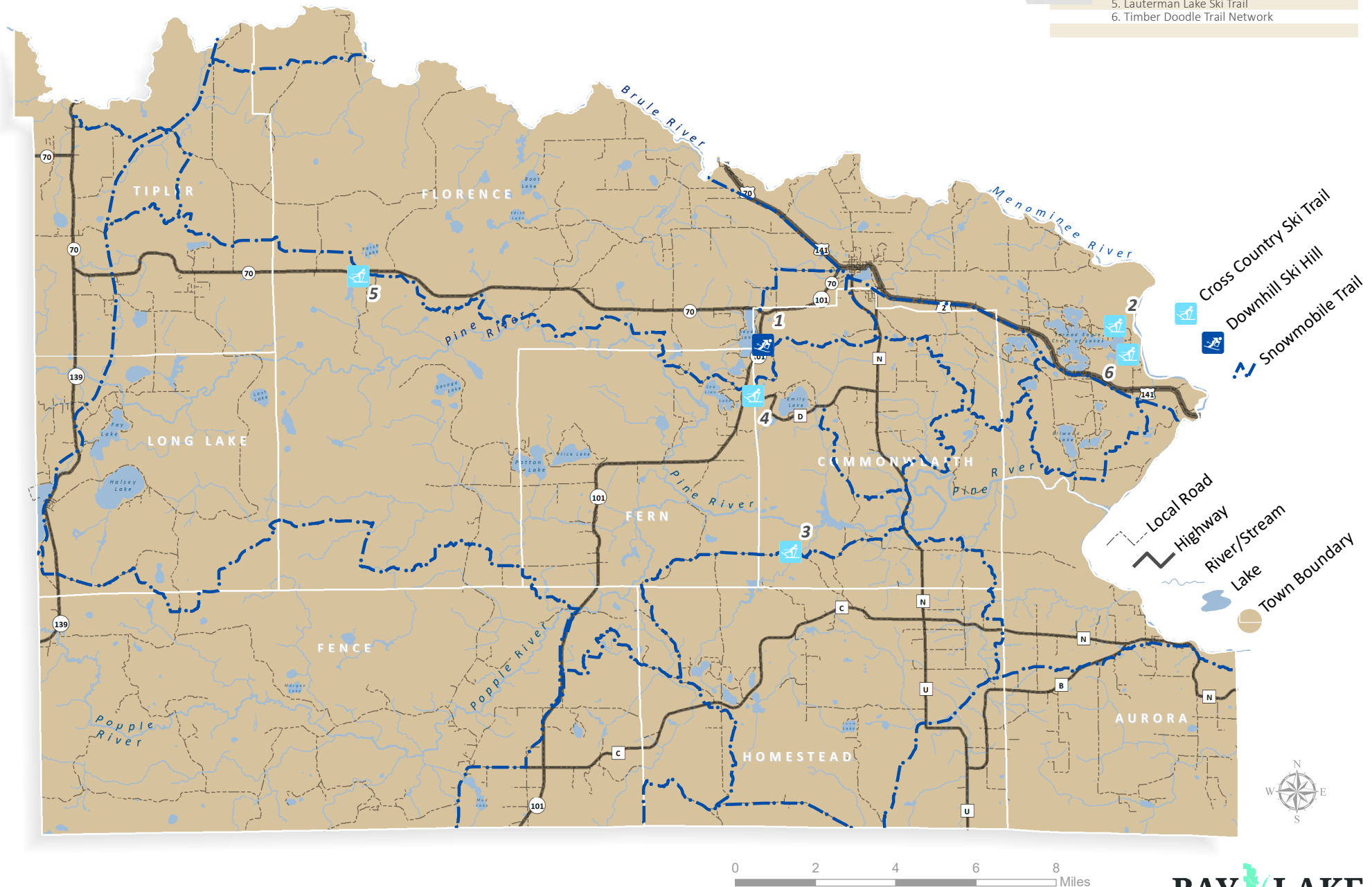
Winter Activity Trails

Florence County

Map 6

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update

- Downhill Ski Hill
- 1. Keyes Peak Ski Hill
- Cross Country Ski Trail
- 2. Dorothy Fox
- 3. Halls Creek Ski Trail
- 4. Lake Emily Ski Trail
- 5. Lauterman Lake Ski Trail
- 6. Timber Doodle Trail Network



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

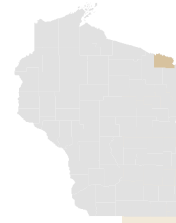
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Surface Water

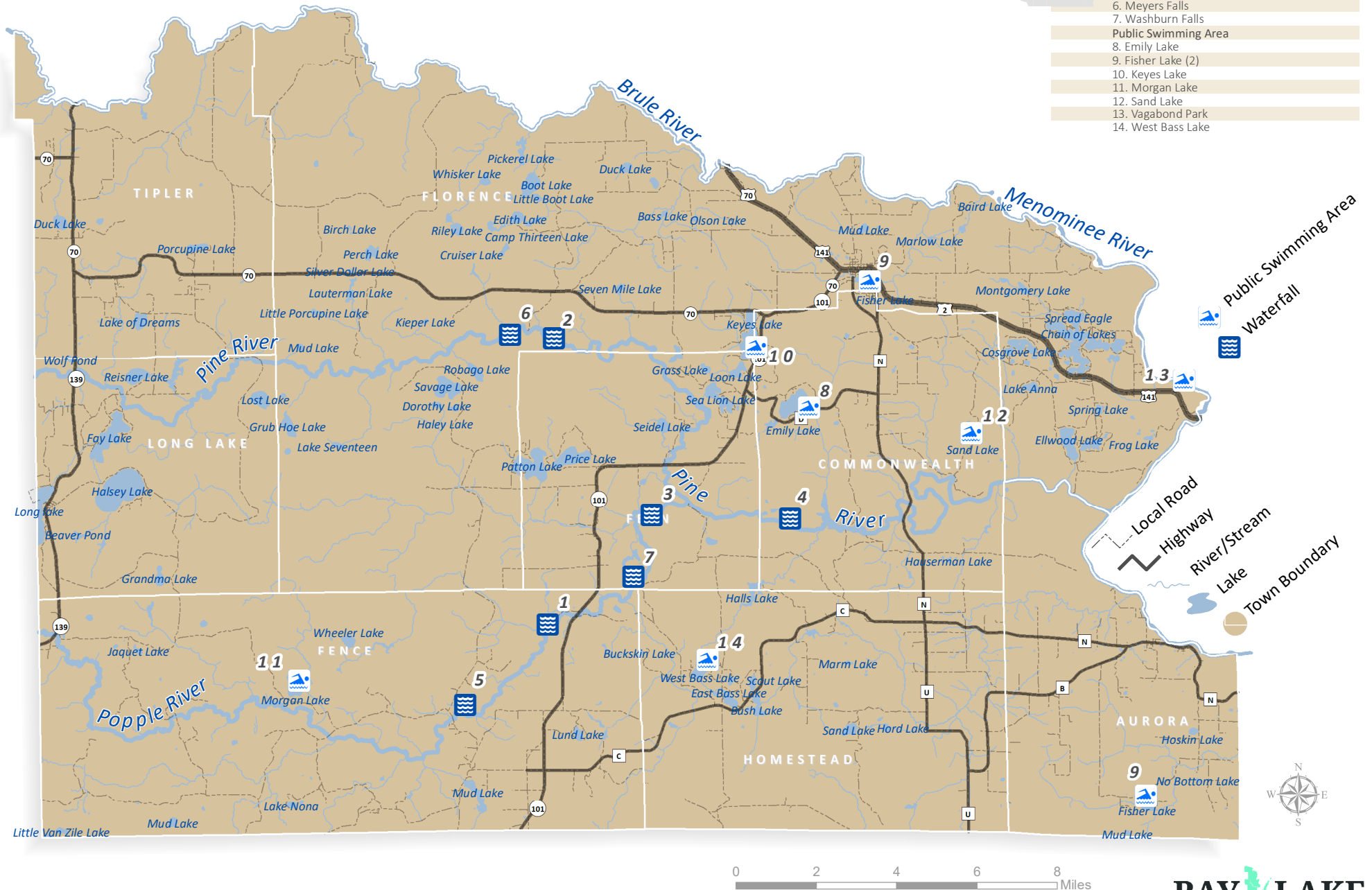
Map 7

Florence County

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update



- Waterfalls
- 1. Big Bull Falls
- 2. Bull Falls
- 3. Jennings Falls
- 4. LaSalle Falls
- 5. Little Bull Falls
- 6. Meyers Falls
- 7. Washburn Falls
- Public Swimming Area
- 8. Emily Lake
- 9. Fisher Lake (2)
- 10. Keyes Lake
- 11. Morgan Lake
- 12. Sand Lake
- 13. Vagabond Park
- 14. West Bass Lake



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

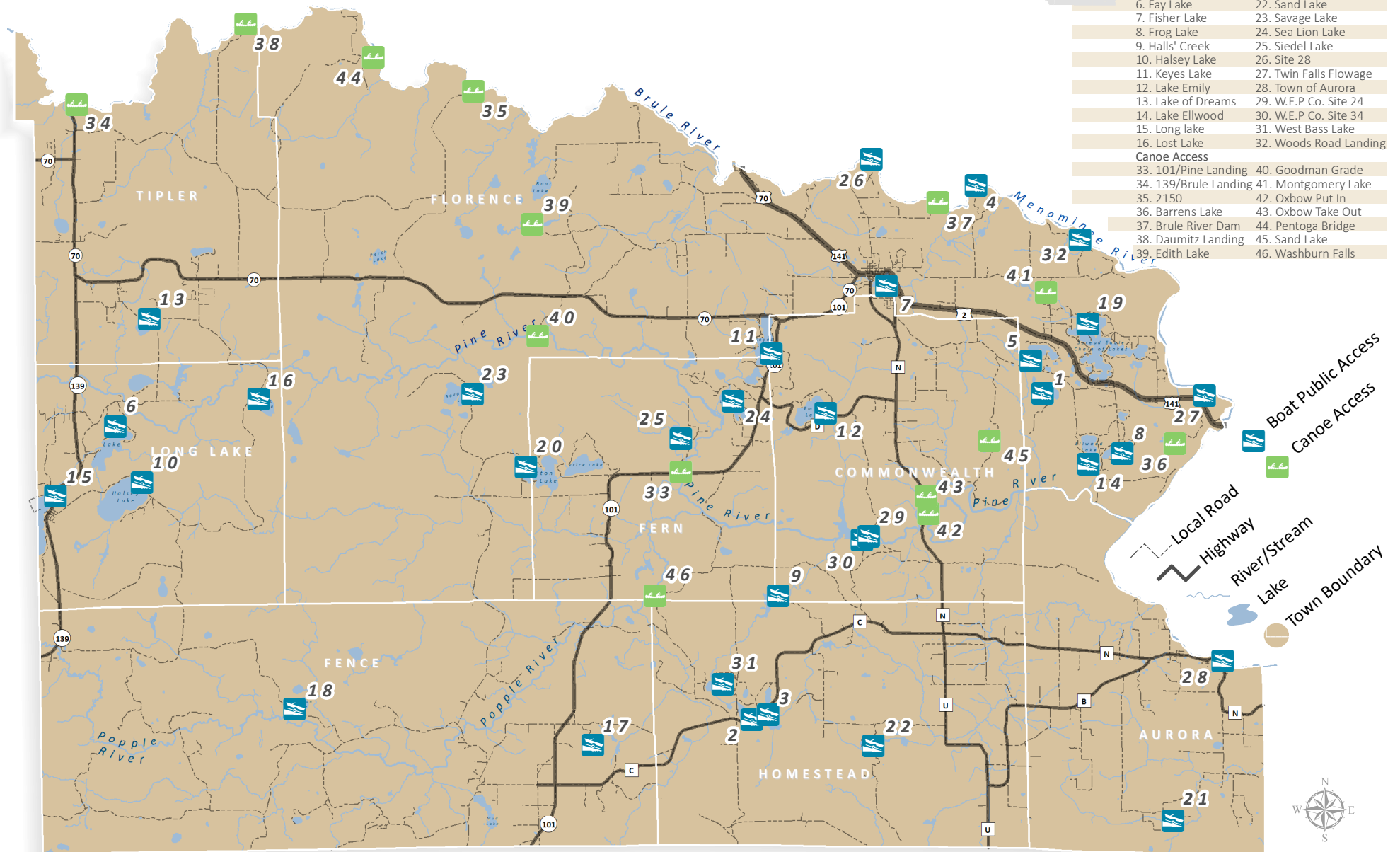
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Boat Public Access Locations

Florence County

Map 8

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Update



Sources: Florence County, 2016, 2018; Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, 2018.

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