

# **Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2025**



<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PROCESS DOCUMENTATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>VISIONING FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING REGION</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>9</b>
PHYSICAL SETTING	9
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS	10
NOTE: 2020 Census data was not available at the time of this writing.	10
POPULATION PROJECTIONS	12
RECREATION AND COUNTY ECONOMICS	12
ECONOMY	14
<b>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>15</b>
TOPOGRAPHY	15
GLACIAL GEOLOGY & SOILS	15
BEDROCK GEOLOGY	16
WATER RESOURCES	16
CLIMATE	16
LAND OWNERSHIP	17
<b>SUPPLY</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>OUTDOOR RECREATION INVENTORY</b>	<b>18</b>
COUNTY PARKS	19
CITY PARKS	20
TOWN PARKS	21
PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS	22
STATE CAMPGROUNDS	22
WATERFALLS	23
NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS	24
MOTORIZED TRAILS	27
FISHING	28
BICYCLING	29
GOLF	29
SCENIC SITES/POINTS OF INTEREST	30
PUBLIC ACCESS LANDS	31
STATE OWNED AND MANAGED PROPERTIES	32
WAYSIDES/PICNIC AREAS	35
LOCAL EVENTS/FESTIVALS	36
SHOOTING RANGES	37
PADDLESPO RTS	38
RUSTIC ROADS	39
<b>OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>RECREATION NEEDS STANDARDS</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>PUBLIC INPUT ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>40</b>
PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY	41
COMMUNITY INPUT	46
TOWN & MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION ASSETS PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENTS 2021-2025	48
TOWN & MUNICIPAL INPUT ON COUNTYWIDE AND LOCAL RECREATIONAL PLANNING ISSUES	49

CLUB/ORGANIZATIONAL INPUT _____	50
CLUB/ORGANIZATIONAL RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS _____	52
<b>PLAN IMPLEMENTATION _____</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>IRON COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN _____</b>	<b>53</b>
COUNTY PARKS _____	54
NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS _____	54
MOTORIZED TRAILS _____	55

## FIGURES

<b>FIGURE 1: IRON COUNTY: POPULATION 1990-2010 _____</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>FIGURE 2: IRON COUNTY POPULATION PYRAMID _____</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>FIGURE 3: GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT BY INDUSTRY _____</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>FIGURE 4: COUNTY PARKS _____</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>FIGURE 5: CITY PARKS _____</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>FIGURE 6: TOWN PARKS _____</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>FIGURE 7: PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS _____</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>FIGURE 8: STATE RESOURCES _____</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>FIGURE 9: WATERFALLS _____</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>FIGURE 10: NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS _____</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>FIGURE 11: HUNTING ACCESS _____</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>FIGURE 12: ATV/UTV TRAILS _____</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>FIGURE 13: SNOWMOBILE TRAILS _____</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>FIGURE 14: BOATING/FISHING ACCESS _____</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>FIGURE 15: BIKE ROUTES _____</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>FIGURE 16: GOLF COURSES _____</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>FIGURE 17: SCENIC SITES/POINTS OF INTEREST _____</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>FIGURE 18: PUBLIC LANDS _____</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>FIGURE 19: FOREST TAX LAW LANDS _____</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>FIGURE 20: PICNIC AREAS/WAYSIDES _____</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>FIGURE 21: PUBLIC EVENTS _____</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>FIGURE 22: SHOOTING RANGES _____</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>FIGURE 23: PADDLESPOOTS _____</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>FIGURE 24: RUSTIC ROADS _____</b>	<b>39</b>

## TABLES

<b>TABLE 1: IRON COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE, 2000-2010 _____</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>TABLE 2: POPULATION PROJECTIONS _____</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>TABLE 3: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY, 2015 _____</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>TABLE 4: ANNUAL AVERAGE WAGES BY INDUSTRY DIVISION _____</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>TABLE 5: LAND OWNERSHIP _____</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TABLE 6: INVENTORY OF EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES _____</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>TABLE 7: IRON COUNTY LAKES WITH PUBLIC BOATING ACCESS _____</b>	<b>28</b>

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to update Iron County's existing outdoor recreation resources, anticipate future demands and to identify recommendations for public outdoor recreation facilities. Submission of this report to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) maintains eligibility for the County and local units of government for a variety of Federal and State Aids to purchase land, maintain and to add facilities to existing outdoor recreation lands. Preparation of this plan will be conducted in accordance with guidance found in Wisconsin Statute 23.30 Outdoor Recreation Program and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

## PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

The Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan was updated over a three-month period from February of 2021 through May of 2021. Iron County cities, towns, schools and outdoor recreation clubs and organizations were sent letters containing their inventory of recreation facilities as listed in the current outdoor recreation plan, asked to update their inventory and to comment on their outdoor recreation facility plans and needs for the next five years. In order to solicit public feedback on recreation issues within Iron County, an online outdoor recreation survey was developed in February, 2021. The survey became active on February 25th, 2021 and remained active until April 12, 2021. Survey results are included in **Appendix A**.

## VISIONING FRAMEWORK

During the development of the Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan 2016-2020, Iron County prepared a number of goals and objectives to address the outdoor recreational needs of the residents. The goals and objectives are intended to assist the County Board and other community leaders in implementing actions deemed important and in the best interest of the County. It is imperative that the goals and objectives continue to be implemented.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **GOAL**

The Outdoor Recreation Plan shall serve to meet their varied recreation needs of Iron County residents and visitors while at the same time protecting, conserving, and enhancing the County's natural, historical, and cultural resources.

### **FACILITIES**

#### **OBJECTIVE 1.0:**

Provide high quality recreation facilities for all users.

##### **Policy 1.1**

Improve and maintain existing facilities.

##### **Policy 1.2**

Develop new recreational facilities that will expand recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors.

##### **Policy 1.3**

Park and recreation facilities shall provide opportunities for all persons regardless of race, creed, age, sex, or economic status.

##### **Policy 1.4**

Develop, improve and maintain recreational facilities according to the Americans with Disabilities Act standard.

##### **Policy 1.5**

Encourage communities and local school districts to cooperate in the development of community recreational and playground facilities.

##### **Policy 1.6**

Measure the economic impacts provided by high quality recreation facilities in Iron County.

##### **Policy 1.7**

Include an educational component with recreational facilities, where appropriate.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **OBJECTIVE 2.0:**

Provide a network of parks and recreation areas that offer a diversity of high quality recreational opportunities.

##### **Policy 2.1**

Explore alternatives to expand recreational opportunities and programs throughout Iron County.

**Policy 2.2**

Expand recreational opportunities by proactively developing partnerships with public agencies and private entities.

**Policy 2.3**

Ensure balance of use, enjoyment and separation where appropriate between motorized and non-motorized modes of recreation.

**Policy 2.4**

Encourage/coordinate the multiple uses of recreational land, areas or facilities.

**Policy 2.5**

Measure the economic impacts of recreational opportunities and programs in Iron County

**Policy 2.6**

Include an educational component with outdoor recreational opportunities and programs, where appropriate.

**RESOURCES****OBJECTIVE 3.0:**

Protect, conserve and enhance natural, historical, and cultural resources.

**Policy 3.1**

Minimize recreational impacts to natural, scenic and historical resources.

**Policy 3.2**

Provide an appropriate level of access to publicly-owned areas unique in natural, historical or cultural resources.

**Policy 3.3**

Partner with communities, area school districts and other organizations to achieve a high level of educational benefits from the county's unique natural, historical and cultural resources.

**Policy 3.4**

Promote economic sustainability through natural, historical, and cultural resources protection.

**PROMOTION****OBJECTIVE 4.0**

Promote outdoor recreation in Iron County.

**Policy 4.1**

Improve funding opportunities for outdoor recreation

**Policy 4.2**

Focus on developing and maintaining partnerships to promote outdoor recreation in Iron County.

**Policy 4.3**

Improve public access to data and information about outdoor recreation in Iron County.

**Policy 4.4**

Promotional efforts should include an educational component, where appropriate.

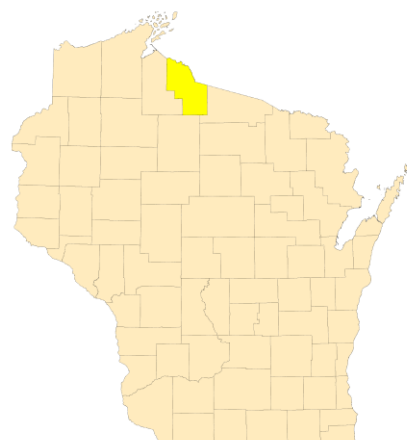


## DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANNING REGION

### SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### PHYSICAL SETTING

Iron County is located in northern Wisconsin and borders the south shore of Lake Superior and the Upper Peninsula of the State of Michigan. Iron County borders the counties of Ashland, Price, and Vilas in Wisconsin, and Gogebic County in Michigan. Iron County is 757.23 square miles in size and had a 2019 estimated population of 5,687. Local units of government within Iron County include ten civil towns and two cities. The City of Hurley is the largest municipality in the county and is the county seat.



**2019 Population:** 5,687

**Median Age:** 54 Years

**Land Area:** 757.23 mi<sup>2</sup>

**Water Area:** 162.01mi<sup>2</sup>

**Percent Public:** 51.6%

**Percent Private:** 48.4 %

**County Forest:** 176,214 Acres

**State Land:** 85,738 Acres

**Private Lands Open to  
Public Recreation:** 64,205  
Acres (2015)

**Public Land Per Capita:** 46  
Acres/person  
(Statewide 1.2 Acres/Person)

**Number of Lakes:** 494

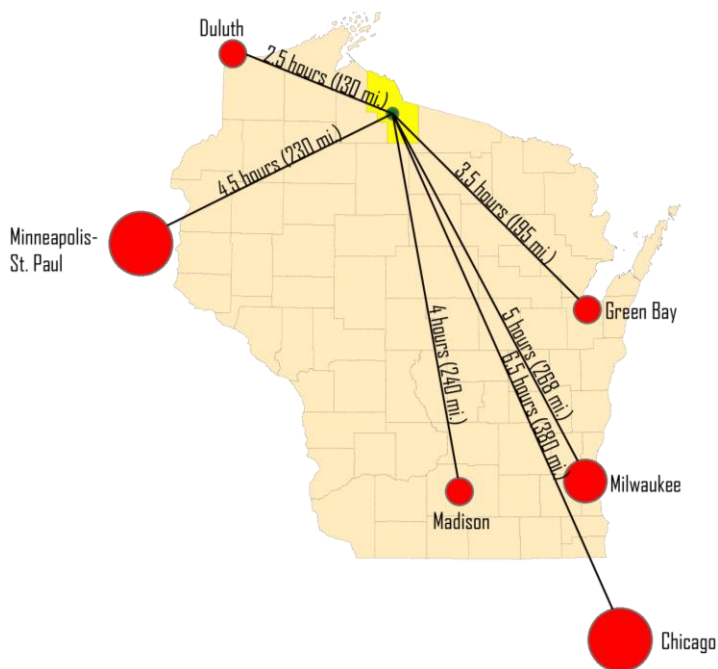
**Miles of Shoreline:** 740

**Miles of Streams:** 633

**Miles of Trout Streams:** 304

**Direct Visitor Spending  
(2014):**  
\$19 million (64th of 72 Counties)

**Tourism Employment  
(2014):**  
264



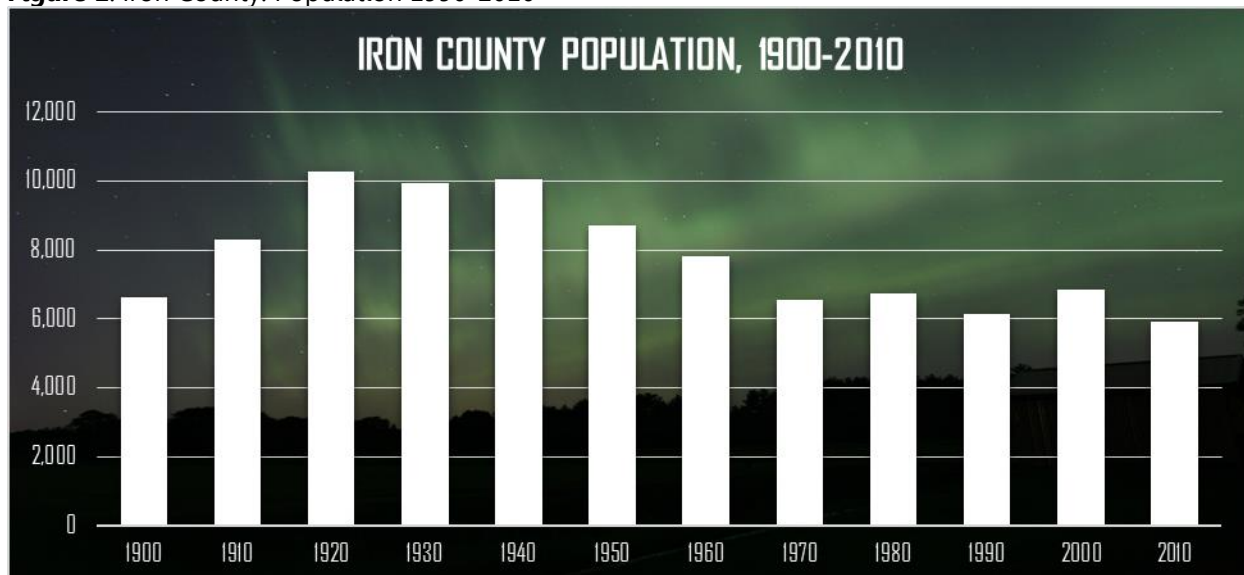
Situated in the remote northern tier of Wisconsin, Iron County is one of the least densely populated counties in the state. Iron County is generally 4 or more hours, by vehicle, to major regional population centers.

## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

*NOTE: 2020 Census data was not available at the time of this writing.*

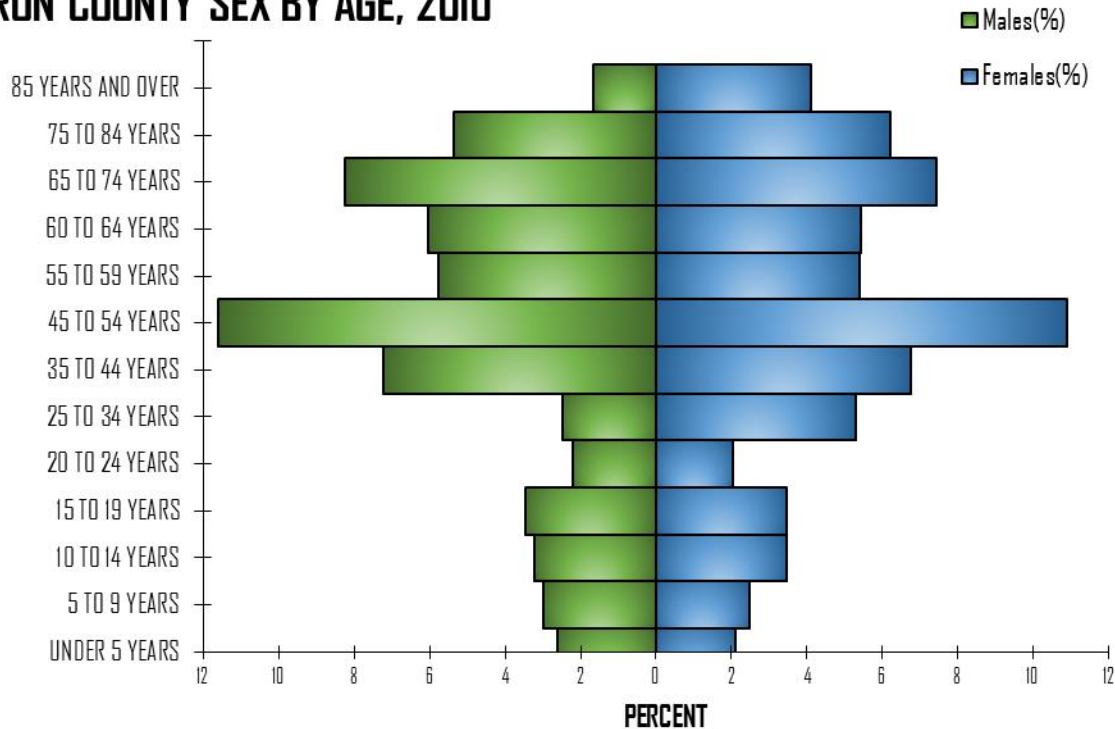
Since the creation of Iron County from Ashland and Oneida Counties in 1893, the county's population has been quite erratic. The population increased the most in the ten years from 1910 to 1920, gaining 1,955 people, and sustained its greatest loss from 1940 to 1950, losing 1,335 residents. Recent data suggests the county's population has stabilized.

**Figure 1:** Iron County: Population 1990-2010



**Figure 2: Iron County Population Pyramid**

## IRON COUNTY SEX BY AGE, 2010



The population distribution of Iron County residents across age classes is reflective of many rural counties in northern Wisconsin. The graphical depiction of sex by age reveals a top-heavy structure, indicative of an aging population. A classic pyramidal shape is indicative of a young, rapidly growing population.

**Table 1: Iron County Demographic Change, 2000-2010**

Age Category	Absolute Change: 2000-2010	Percent Change: 2000-2010
Under 5	-61	-22.3%
5 to 14	-237	-30.1%
15 to 24	-171	-25.2%
25 to 34	-1241	-73.3%
35 to 44	-439	-40.8%
45 to 54	48	4.9%
55 to 64	170	19.8%
65 to 74	-92	-11.4%
75 to 84	-47	-8.2%
84 and over	50	23.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder

The recreational needs of all Iron County age groups will be represented in this plan. Generally speaking, older residents are interested in more passive recreation, such as enjoying scenic views through the provision of seating and benches that allows for the enjoyment of nature trails and paths. Younger people tend to enjoy more active recreation, such as fishing and fitness trails and motorized recreation. Families often enjoy a broad range of activities such as camping and picnicking as well as motorized recreation.

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Table 1.2 shows population projections for Iron County from 2010 to 2030. These projections are based on past and current population trends and are intended to be a baseline guide for county decision makers. The projections indicated that Iron County will experience a slow decline in population over the next 25 years. Although Iron County is “projected” to decline in population over the next 25 years, many feel that the county will actually increase in population like it has over the last decade.

**Table 2:** Population Projections

<b>Year</b>	<b>Iron County</b>
2020	5,680
2030	5,970
2040	5,420
Absolute Change 2010-2040	-496

Source: <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/Divisions/Intergovernmental-Relations/Demographic-Services-Center/Wisconsin-Population-Projections/>

## RECREATION AND COUNTY ECONOMICS

In 2015, there were 1,945 jobs in Iron County (EMSI, 2015). A total of 648 (33.3%) jobs fall within the tourism and recreation-related categories of retail trade, accommodation and food services, real estate and rental/leasing, and arts entertainment and recreation. This means that one out of every three jobs in Iron County is either partially or wholly dependent upon tourism and recreation.

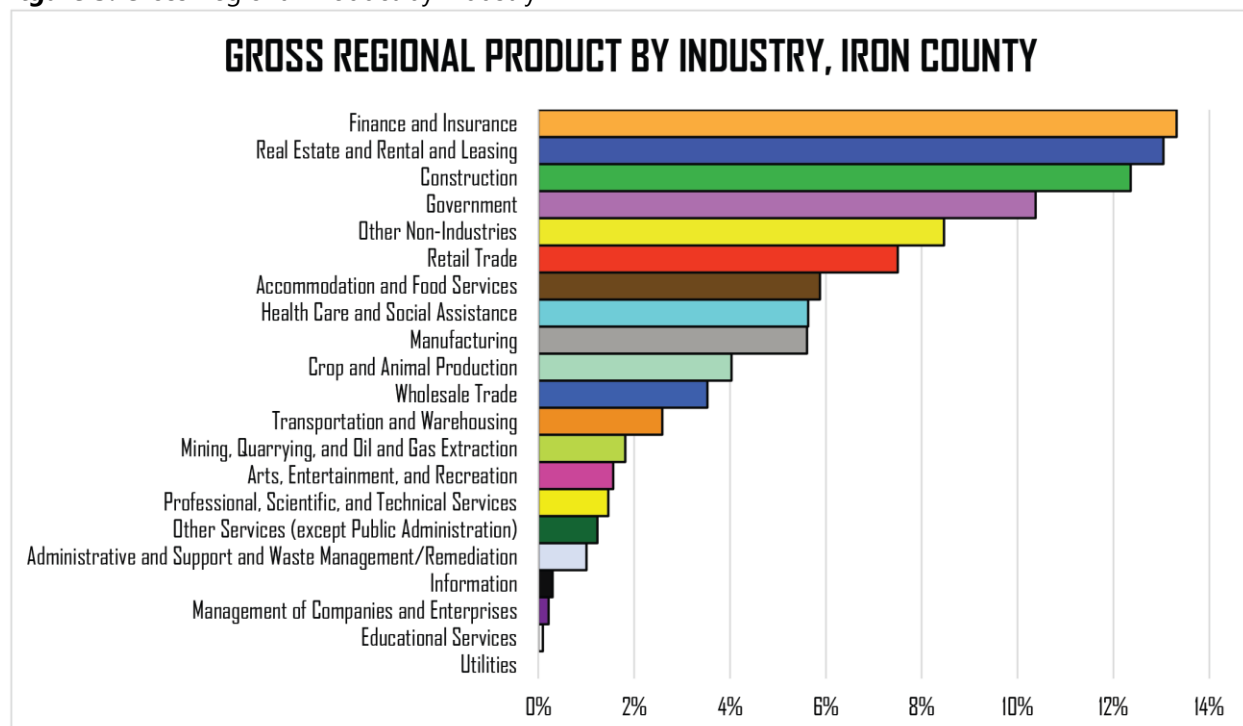
**Table 3:** Employment by Industry, 2015

<b>Industry</b>	<b>2015 Jobs</b>
Government	347
<b>Retail Trade</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	<b>245</b>
Health Care and Social Assistance	231
Construction	210
Manufacturing	183
<b>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</b>	<b>90</b>
Wholesale Trade	60
<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b>	<b>52</b>
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	50
Transportation and Warehousing	49
Other Services (except Public Administration)	42
Finance and Insurance	35
Administrative and Support/Waste Management and Remediation	33
Crop and Animal Production	20
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	16
Information	11
Management of Companies and Enterprises	<10
Educational Services	<10

EMSI, 2015

Gross Regional Product (GRP) is a measurement of total economic output. GRP is defined as the market value of all final goods and services produced by all firms in a regional economy. In 2013, the total GRP for Iron County was \$207.1 million, resulting in \$129 million in earnings, \$15.2 million in taxes on production and \$63 million in property income. The total GRP for tourism-related categories was \$58 million, or 28% of total county GRP.

**Figure 3:** Gross Regional Product by Industry



According to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, direct visitor spending was \$19 million in 2014. Total business sales related to recreation and tourism were \$26.1 million, while the total labor income was \$4.7 million. State and local tax revenue generated by tourism was \$2.4 million.

In Iron County, forestry is the largest employer in the county, providing 15.4% of all jobs. Forestry and logging account for \$3.3 million in output and \$1.3 million in value-added economic impacts. Sawmills and wood products provide \$77.7 million in total output and an additional \$18.5 million in value added impacts.

County forests are essential to Wisconsin's forest products industry and economy. Each year, these lands generate anywhere from \$25 to \$30 million in timber revenues for counties and towns. Statewide, approximately 16,000 jobs and \$4.6 billion in forest products production result from the timber harvested from county forests. County forests also provide many recreation and tourism opportunities.

Revenues from county forest lands is an important part of the county's annual budget portfolio. Under Wisconsin's Severance Tax Law, 10% of the gross revenue generated by timber sales on County Forest must be paid to towns. These individual payments are based on the acreage of county forest within each town.

## ECONOMY

In addition to having one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, Iron County also has some of the lowest incomes in the state. As shown in Table 1.7, annual average wages earned by workers in Iron County in 2007 fell short of the statewide average for all industry sectors. Workers employed in the industry sectors of Manufacturing, Financial Activities, and Professional & Business Services received less than 60 percent of the State of Wisconsin average for workers in those same fields. Workers in the Construction industry sector earned the highest annual wage followed by the Public Administration industry.

**Table 4:** Annual Average Wages by Industry Division

	<b>Iron County Average Annual Wage</b>	<b>State Average Annual Wage</b>	<b>Percent of State Average</b>
All Industries	\$26,162	\$41,985	62.3%
Construction	\$32,035	\$51,670	62.0%
Education & Health Services	\$33,379	\$43,781	76.2%
Financial Activities	\$21,827	\$58,493	37.3%
Information	ND	\$56,015	NA
Leisure & Hospitality	\$12,868	\$15,221	84.5%
Manufacturing	\$27,968	\$52,413	53.4%
Natural Resources	\$57,579	\$33,047	174.2%
Other Service	ND	\$23,598	NA
Professional & Business Services	\$26,668	\$49,451	53.9%
Public Administration	\$33,011	\$42,198	78.2%
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	\$23,361	\$35,946	65.0%

Sources: Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development-Iron Co Workforce Profile 2012. ND = Non Disclosable—data do not meet BLS or State agency disclosure standards

## **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **TOPOGRAPHY**

Iron County is divided by the Penoque-Gogebic Range, two parallel ridges running southwesterly from Hurley, that separate the Lake Superior lowlands to the north from the Northern Highland Peneplain to the south. This geologic feature is part of a large regional landscape that extends eastward to the Keweenaw Peninsula in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Ore deposits were mined extensively in these highlands from the 1880's through the 1960's. The northern third of Iron County slopes generally downward from the Penoque Range northward to Lake Superior, forming a large coastal plain. Numerous rivers and streams bisect this area. To the south of the range, the northern rim of the Northern Highland Peneplain begins its gradual rise. This region contains undulating gravely pitted outwash containing many lakes and wetlands. The highest elevation found in Iron County is approximately 1,877 feet above sea level at the former Pleasant Lake Lookout in Section 34, T44N-R1E in the Town of Knight. The lowest elevation of 603 feet above sea level is found at the Lake Superior coast in the Town of Saxon. Information related to topography was obtained through the United States Geological Survey.

### **GLACIAL GEOLOGY & SOILS**

With the exception of the outcrop areas, all of Iron County is covered with a variety of glacial deposits. Clay deposits cover most of the northern end of the county and ground and end moraine glacial till deposits cover most of the center of the county. Pitted outwash covers the southern part of the county, and outwash is found in narrow areas, primarily stream beds. The clayey deposits consist of mostly clayey till, covered by a thin layer of clayey lake deposits in a few areas. The ground and end moraine till deposits consist of a mixture of sand, gravel, boulders, silt and clay. Most of these deposits in the county have a high proportion of sand except for end moraine deposits in the far northern part of the county which are mostly clayey till.

Soil survey interpretations are provided for specific soil uses. Interpretations for each soil use are based on a set of interpretative soil properties. Soil suitability ratings are usually made on the basis of restrictive soil interpretative properties such as slope, occurrence of internal free water, and texture of surface horizons. A rating of "very limited" indicates that the soil has one or more features that are unfavorable for the specified use. A rating of "moderately limited" indicates that the soil has features that are moderately favorable for the specified use. These limitations can be sometimes be overcome through special designs or planning.

Camp areas require site preparation, such as shaping and leveling the tent and parking areas, stabilizing roads and intensively used areas, and installing sanitary facilities and utility lines. Camp areas are subject to heavy foot traffic and some vehicular traffic. The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect the ease of developing camp areas and the performance of the areas after development. Slope, stoniness, and depth to bedrock are the main concerns affecting the development of camp areas.

In general, soil limitations for camping areas and trails in Iron County are primarily due to wetness and ponding (wetlands), slope, and sandiness.

## **BEDROCK GEOLOGY**

Iron County is underlain by three general bedrock formations. Sedimentary rocks, which include sandstone, shale and conglomerate, are found under the extreme northwest corner of the county. Under the area along and to the north of the Gogebic Range are lava flows, formed mostly of basalt and crystalline rocks consisting of steeply dipping and complexly faulted layers of slate, iron formation and dolomitic marble. The remainder of the county is underlain by undifferentiated crystalline rocks. Numerous bedrock outcrop areas exist in the county, especially along streams, in the Hurley-Montreal area along the Gogebic Range, in the Saxon Harbor area and in an area west of Mercer. Depths to bedrock vary widely in the county from over 400 feet in the northwest corner to less than 50 feet in and around the Gogebic Range and other areas.

## **WATER RESOURCES**

Water resources are an important component of the natural landscape. These dynamic resources provide many benefits to both humans and wildlife. Lakes, rivers, streams, waterfalls, wetlands and floodplains are part of a natural cycle and provide many outdoor recreational opportunities. These resources not only provide direct recreational opportunities, such as fishing and boating, but they also enhance wildlife habitat that offer wildlife hiking, viewing and hunting activities.

## **CLIMATE**

The climate of Iron County is separated into two general classifications: a *lake modified continental* climate along the Lake Superior shoreline area and a continental climate throughout the rest of the county. The continental climate is generally characterized by hot summers and cold winters. This pattern is modified along the Lake Superior coast by the cold lake waters that serve to moderate summertime temperatures and increase wintertime temperatures. Average temperatures in Iron County range from 13° F in January to 67° F in July. Average temperatures along the lakeshore can be as much as 10-15° cooler in the summer and slightly warmer during the winter months.

Average annual precipitation varies from about 36 inches in the Penokee highlands of north central Iron County, to 32 inches along the lake and in the far southern part of the county. Average annual snowfall ranges from 160 inches at Hurley to 80 inches in the southwestern part of the county. Lake enhanced winter storms produce generally higher snowfalls across northern Iron County, particularly in areas of high elevation.



## LAND OWNERSHIP

Land ownership has a significant impact on the natural resource base by influencing development patterns, land use, management, policy, and public use/access.

**Table 5:** Land Ownership

Total Area	514,292 acres
County	176,214 acres
Federal	0 acres
State	85,738 acres
Municipal	3,012 acres
Tribal Lands	16,982 acres

Sources: Iron County GIS

## SUPPLY

### OUTDOOR RECREATION INVENTORY

**Table 6:** Inventory of Existing Recreational Facilities

	TABLE	TRASH CAN	GRILL	SHELTER	DOCK	LANDING	TOILET	PLAYGROUND	SHOWER	CAMPING	SWIMMING
<b>COUNTY PARKS</b>											
Lake of the Falls	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	32	✓
Schomberg Park	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	14	
Weber Lake	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	11	✓
Saxon Harbor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	31	✓
Potato River Falls	✓	✓		✓			✓			7	
<b>CITY PARKS</b>											
Al Riccelli Park	✓			✓			✓	✓			
Veteran's Memorial Field		✓					✓				
Cary Road Park							✓	✓			
Albert C. Morzenti Sr. Memorial Park	✓	✓	✓					✓			
Slugger Baron Park	✓							✓			
Gile Park on Gile Flowage	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Dan Young Park								✓			
<b>TOWN PARKS</b>											
Carow Community Park	✓			✓			✓	✓			✓
Upson Community Park	✓			✓			✓			✓	
Kimball Park	✓			✓			✓	✓		✓	
Kimball Town Baseball Field							✓				
Oma Town Park	✓			✓			✓	✓			✓
<b>STATE CAMPGROUNDS</b>											
Sandy Beach Campgrounds	✓					✓	✓			37	✓
Turtle Flambeau Flowage Islands	✓						✓			✓	
<b>PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS</b>											
Frontier Bar Campgrounds	✓						✓	✓		✓	
Loon Lagoon Campground										✓	

There are many recreational facilities owned and managed by the towns, county and state that are available to residents and visitors of Iron County. In addition to the maintained recreational facilities, county forests and bodies of water also provide countless recreational opportunities. In addition to the campgrounds, the public is allowed to set up and camp on the County Forest for up to two weeks in the same location.

## COUNTY PARKS



**Figure 4:** County Parks

### Lake of the Falls

A 40-acre county park and campground (32 units) located at the beginning of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, 6 miles west of Mercer on County Road FF. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fire rings, drinking water, restrooms, showers, swimming, boat ramp, fishing, pavilion, electrical hookups, dumpstation, and a caretaker.

### Schomberg Park

A 160-acre county park and campground (14 units) located off Highway 51 in the Town of Oma along Layman's Creek. Facilities include a restrooms and showers, pavilion and picnic area, tables, fire rings, electrical hookups, drinking water, dump station, ATV wash station, ATV trail access. Schomberg Park also has a 1.7 mile snowshoe trail loop with parking available in the winter.

### Weber Lake

This County Park and campground (12 units) is located west of Hurley off County Road E in the Town of Anderson. The park consists of ten acres with a picnic area, tables, fire rings, drinking water, pavilion, restrooms, changing rooms, boat ramp, fishing, swimming and electrical hookups.

### Saxon Harbor

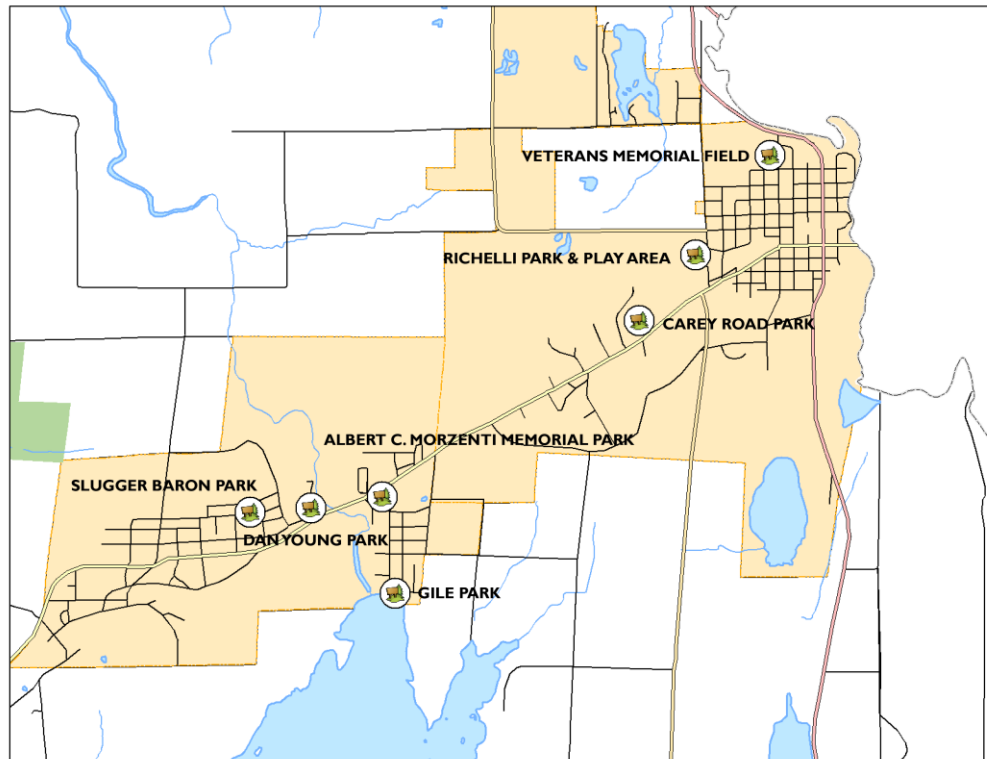
This County Park and campground (31 units) is at Lake Superior, north of U.S. 2 off Highway 122 and County Road A. The Harbor includes 81 slips for boats up to 45 feet long, 12 transient moorings, three boat launches, parking for 50 trailers, gas & fuel for sale, boat septic system pump out, water, boat-lift, restroom and shower facilities and dump station. Picnic tables, a pavilion, playground, fire rings, electrical hookup and swimming area are available. ATV trail access. In 2016 the entire campground and marina were destroyed in a flood. The campground and marina were rebuilt and opened in 2020.

### Potato River Falls

Located two miles west of Highway 169 in the town of Gurney, rustic campsites (7 units) with fire rings & picnic tables are available at Potato River Falls. Hiking/biking trails, restrooms, picnic tables and a pavilion surround the waterfalls and trout fishing possibilities.

## CITY PARKS

**Figure 5:** City Parks



### **Al Ricelli Park**

This five-acre community park is located at 805 Maple Street in the City of Hurley. Facilities include playground equipment, picnic tables, basketball court, pavilion and restrooms. Little League fields are located adjacent to Ricelli Park, which includes bleacher seating and a concession stand.

### **Veteran's Memorial Field**

Located on Fifth Avenue in Hurley, Veteran's Memorial Field offers opportunity for various forms of recreation. A football field with two large sets of bleachers offers a location for home football games in the fall accompanied by concession stands, restrooms and locker room facilities. Also, at Veteran's Memorial Field, there are basketball and tennis courts for public use.

### **Cary Road Park**

This park is located off Highway 77 in the City of Hurley. Facilities include a softball field, volleyball court, horseshoe pits, bocce ball court, playground equipment, combination concession stand/restrooms and a paved walking trail.

### **Albert C. Morzenti Sr. Memorial Park**

This 10-acre park is located on Highway 77 in the City of Montreal. The west fork of the Montreal River flows along this park near the picnic area. Facilities include picnic tables, grills, swing set, trash containers, and a historical marker commemorating the site of the world's deepest iron mine. Montreal baseball fields are adjacent to this park.

### **Slugger Baron Park**

Located on Ohio Avenue in the City of Montreal, this park consists of picnic tables and new

playground equipment.

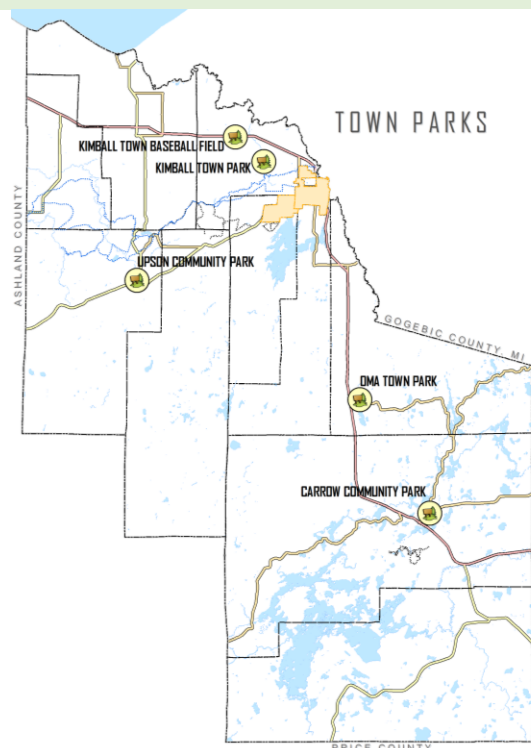
### **Gile Park of Gile Park Flowage**

Gile Park is a park owned by the City of Montreal, located west of Hurley on Hwy 77, left into Gile to Flowage. The park has a picnic area, tables, fireplaces, drinking water, pavilion, restrooms, changing rooms, slide and swings, swimming, boat launching ramps and fishing.

### **Dan Young Park**

Located in the City of Montreal. The park includes a local softball field, swing sets and other play equipment.

## **TOWN PARKS**



**Figure 6:** Town Parks

### **Carow Community Park**

This town park is located on County Road J on Grand Portage Lake in Mercer. Facilities include a picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, and restrooms, swimming area, playground equipment, bike racks, ball field and paved walking track.

### **Upsin Community Park**

This town park is maintained by the Town of Anderson, and is located on the Potato River west of Upsin. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, restrooms, overnight camping, electrical hookups, waterfall and trout fishing.

### **Kimball Town Park**

The Kimball Town Park west of Hurley and south on Park Road on the Montreal River offers a beautiful view of Kimball Falls. Other facilities include a picnic area, tables, fire rings, pavilion, restrooms, overnight camping, trout and walleye fishing, walking trails, and kayak options.

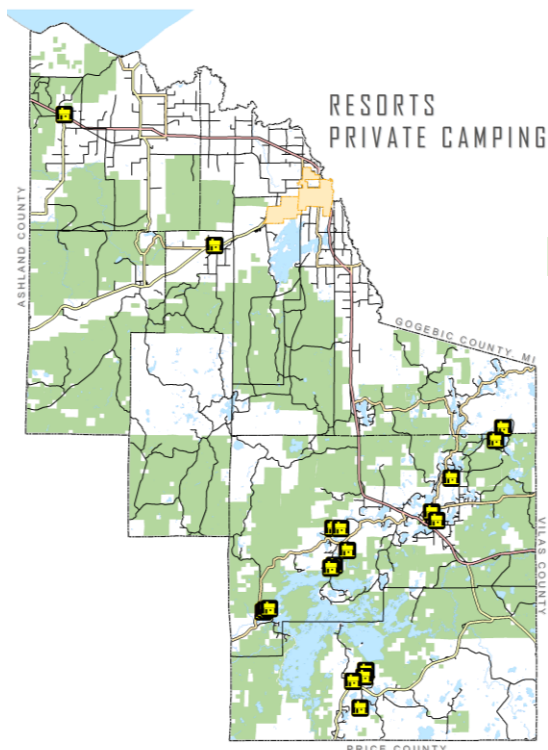
### **Kimball Town Baseball field**

The Town of Kimball owns a baseball field situated on US Highway 2. This facility includes fences and an outhouse. This field has been neglected over the years and is in need of maintenance before any future use.

### **Oma Town Park**

This town park located on County Road G is found on Pine Lake. Facilities include picnic area, tables, fireplaces, pavilion, restrooms, swimming and a playground.

## PRIVATE CAMPGROUNDS



### Frontier Bar Campgrounds

Camping options can be found just behind the Frontier Bar in Cedar off Highway 2. Facilities include fireplaces, drinking water, restrooms, picnic area and tables. Sewer, electrical, water, laundromat and pull thru sites are available to RVs. Easy access to ATV trail 2.

### Loon Lagoon Campground

Located two blocks east of Highway 51 in Mercer, Wisconsin, on the outlet of Grand Portage Lake. It is an open, grassy park within walking distance of stores and restaurants. The grounds are centrally located for day trips and fishing in historic Iron County. Camping on Grand Portage Lake can be found at 2580 Margaret St., Mercer.

Figure 7: Private Campgrounds

## STATE CAMPGROUNDS



### Sandy Beach Campgrounds

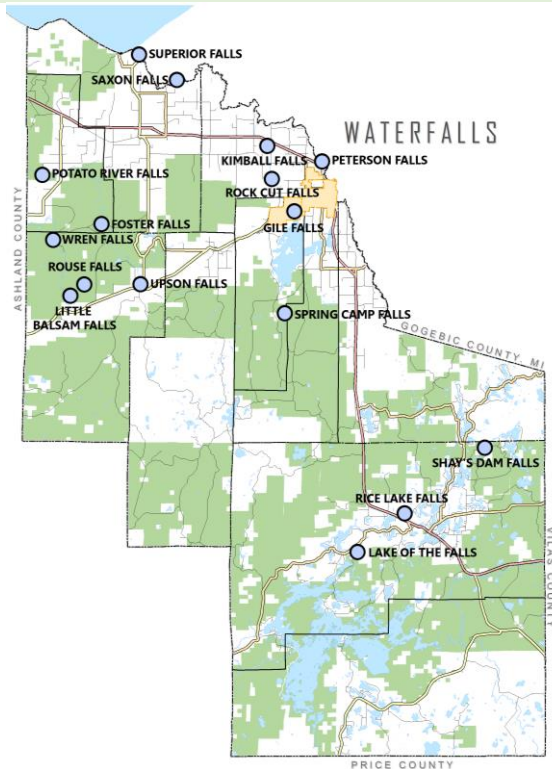
This state campground is located on Powell Marsh Road in the northeastern corner of the Town of Sherman. Facilities include rustic campsites, toilets, tables, picnic area, fire rings, drinking water, swimming and a boat launch. Maps are available at the Mercer Ranger Station and the Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce or by visiting the DNR web site. (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/turtleflambeau/>) Boat launches are available in several locations.

### Turtle Flambeau Flowage Islands

The Turtle Flambeau Flowage offers excellent fishing, canoeing and kayaking opportunities. Six group sites on Big Island are available by reservation only. There is a fee for these sites. Reservations can be made by contacting Reserve America or the WDNR website.

Figure 8: State Resources

## WATERFALLS



**Figure 9:** Waterfalls

**Superior Falls** - 90 feet  
Montreal River (Lake Superior/Saxon Area)

**Potato River Falls** - 90 feet  
Potato River (Gurney Area)

**Peterson Falls** - 35 feet  
West Branch Montreal River (Gile Area)

**Upson Falls** - 18 feet  
Potato River (Upson Area)

**Gile Falls** - 15 feet  
West Branch Montreal River (Gile Area)

**Shay's Dam Falls** - 15 feet  
Turtle River (Mercer Area)

**Kimball Falls** - 10 feet  
West Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area)

**Lake of the Falls** - 10 feet  
Turtle River (Flambeau Flowage Area)

**Rock Cut Falls** - 15 feet - (No Public Access)  
West Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area)

**Spring Camp Falls** - 20 feet  
East Branch Montreal River (Hurley Area)

**Wren Falls** - 15 feet  
Tyler Forks River (Gurney Area)

**Foster Falls** - 25 feet  
Potato River (Gurney Area)

**Rice Lake Falls** - 10 feet  
Turtle River (Mercer Area)

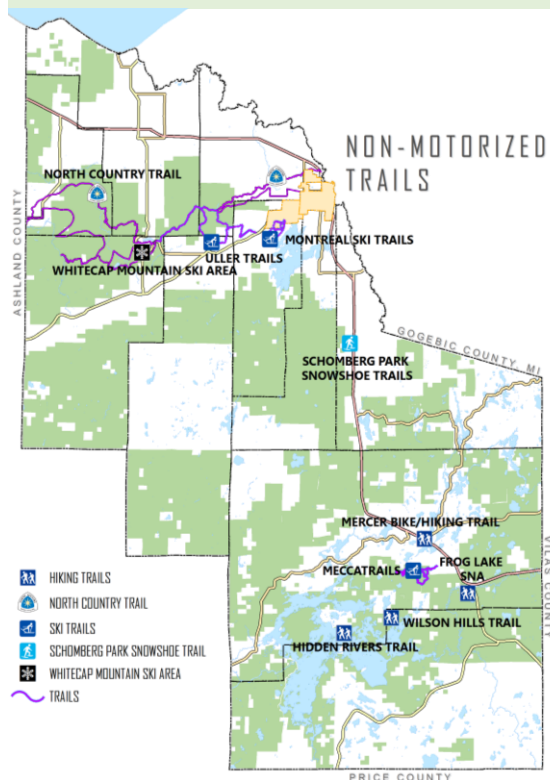
**Rouse Falls** - 15 feet  
Rouse Creek (Upson Area)

**Little Balsam Falls** - 8 feet  
Tyler Forks River (Upson Area)

**Saxon Falls** - 78 feet  
Montreal River (Lake Superior/Saxon Area)



## NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS



**Figure 10:** Non-Motorized Trails

*Non-motorized recreational facilities in Iron County include scenic hiking and walking trails, off-road biking, cross country ski trails, and canoe routes. What follows is a listing and descriptions of current and proposed non-motorized trails in Iron County.*

### MECCA Trail

The MECCA (Mercer Cross-Country Association) Trail system is located in the Town of Mercer and consists of hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country ski trails. These trails also serve as hunter walking trails in the fall. There are 3 miles of looping snowshoe trails and new boardwalks for summer hiking. MECCA grooms 20 km for skiing through the woods and around the Little Turtle Flowage. The trails are on Iron County Forest and State lands. The club operates a log chalet at the main trailhead 2 miles off Hwy 51 on the south side of Mercer, via Beachway Street.

### Flambeau Trail

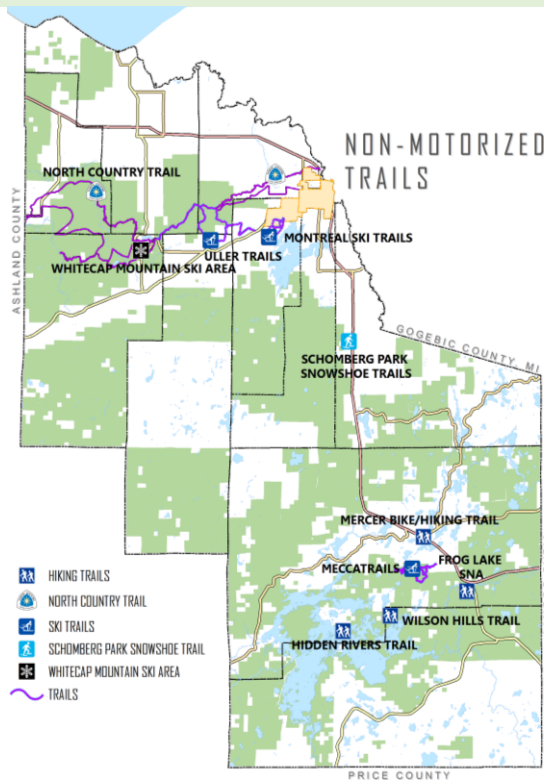
The Flambeau Trail was the key transportation route for Native Americans long before European exploration. Later, the trail hosted voyagers, fur traders and settlers during their journeys throughout the region. The Flambeau Trail crossed the Continental Divide linking the Lake Superior and Mississippi watersheds. Today, the Flambeau Trail is used as an auto tour highlighting historic sites along the trail.

### North Country Trail

The North Country National Scenic Trail is a premier footpath that stretches more than 4,000 miles to link communities and wilderness areas across seven northern states. Wisconsin has the smallest distance of any of the seven states the North Country Trail crosses, and the second smallest amount of trail developed to date. The trail crosses from Michigan on Hwy 122 Ironwood into Saxon and into Ashland County near Copper Falls State Park on Hwy 169.



## NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS CONT...



### Historic Montreal Ski Trails

The Historic Montreal Ski Trails are 11km of trails located in Montreal and Pence, WI. Trails are groomed for classic skiing with room for snowshoers, walkers and dogs. The trail winds through remnants of the old Montreal Mine. Interpretive signs highlight a few of the mining era artifacts that remain along the trail. The trail is maintained by Penoque Ranger volunteers.

### Uller Trail

The Uller Trail is part of the Nordic Ski Trails system and is located along the Penoque Range from Pence and Iron Belt to Weber Lake. Three loops have recently been constructed and are accessed from Weber Lake. Improved signage and a warming cabin have been added. The trail's terrain is hilly and remote and is approximately 23 km in length. Iron Co Forestry & Penoque Ranger volunteers maintain the trail.

### Pines and Mines Mountain Bike Trail System

This trail system offers 300 miles of marked and mapped mountain biking opportunities in the abundant public lands of Iron County and the nearby Ottawa National Forest.

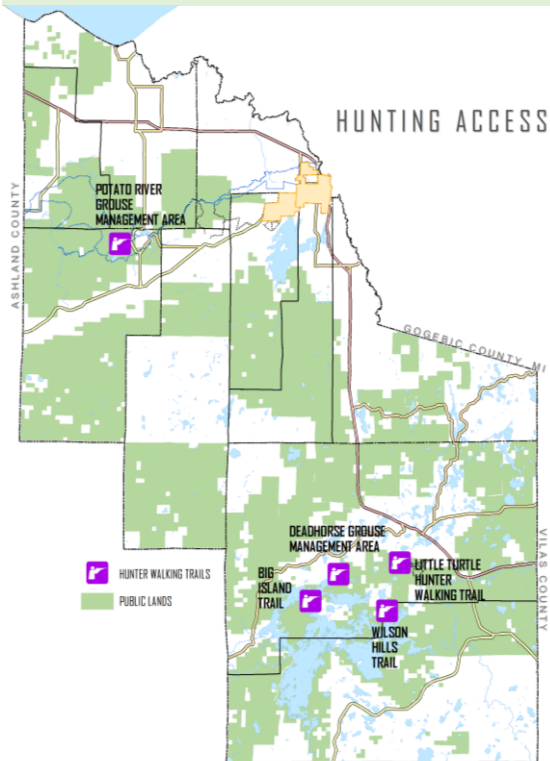
### Hidden Rivers Nature Trail

This interpretive trail is located at Fisherman's Landing on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage in the Town of Mercer. The trail is two miles long and includes signage describing the history and resources of the Flowage.

### Downtown Mercer Biking/Walking Trail Project

A paved hiking/biking trail has been constructed from the Mercer Chamber of Commerce on Hwy 51 in Mercer for 7.8 miles and into Vilas County hooking up with the 52 miles Heart of Vilas Trail System. The next segment planned is from the Mercer Chamber to Carow Park. A following segment would be from Carow Park to CTH J and CTH W.

## NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS CONT...



**Figure 11:** Hunting Access

### Schomberg Park Snowshoe Trail

Two loops totaling 1.7 miles of snowshoe trail. Parking is available on the south parking lot. Future plans include bridges over the creeks in order to allow grooming for ski trails. This trail may also be used as a hiking trail in the summer.

### Hunter Walking Trails

The Iron County Forestry Department has received a grant from the Ruffed Grouse Society to map and print hunting trails throughout Iron County on the County Forest. This project began in 2009 and continues on.

### Deadhorse Trail

This hunter walking trail is located off of Popko Circle West in the Town of Mercer. The trail includes interpretive and informational signs about grouse habitat management and a deer/hare enclosure. It is managed in cooperation with the Ruffed Grouse Society.

## MOTORIZED TRAILS

### ATV Trails

Iron County boasts one of Wisconsin's largest ATV system starting in the Hurley area, with more than 250 miles of trails and routes to take riders deep into the heart of Iron County. Along the routes, motorists will find a variety of pit stops offering food, beverages, gas, lodging and scenic outlooks. For maps on Iron County's ATV trails, contact the Iron County Development Zone Council or the Hurley and Mercer Chamber of Commerce.

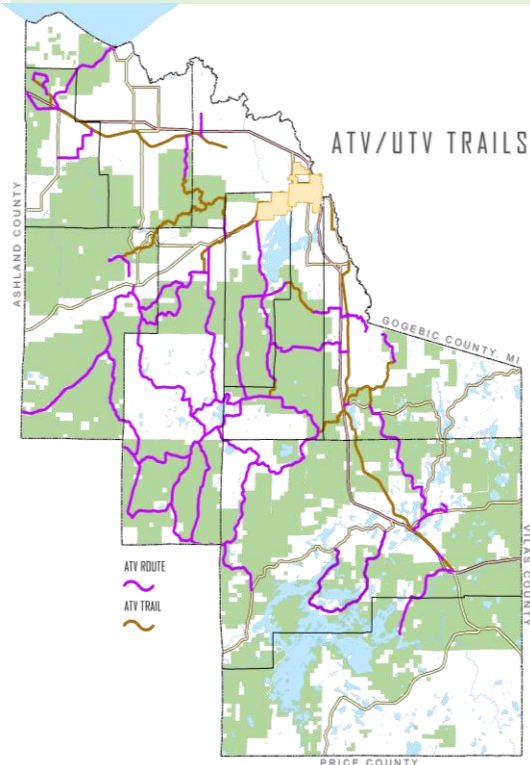
The Iron County Forestry Department, along with the Iron County ATV Association and Mercer Dusty Loons, maintains 120 miles of ATV trails throughout the County. The Forestry Department also contracts with the White Thunder Riders and Mercer SnoGoers to maintain 167.5 miles of winter ATV trails.

### Snowmobile Trails

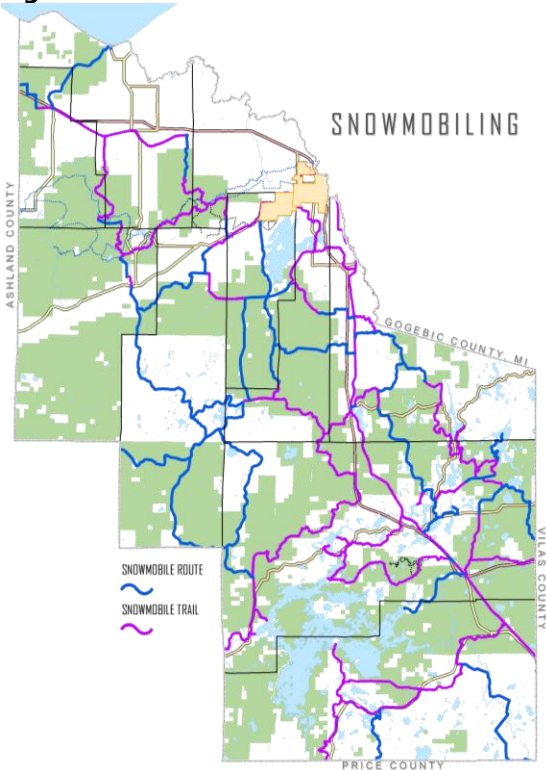
Over 300 miles of well-groomed, uncrowded snowmobile trails traverse Iron County. Unmatched beauty, with a unique microclimate, along with the most reliable snow in the Midwest guarantees Iron County snow even when other areas are without hence Governor Doyle's designation of Iron County as the Snow Capital of Wisconsin in 2009. In 2019, Iron County was designated a Snowmobile Friendly County.

Iron County's snowmobile trails connect and incorporate many of the county's historic communities, transportation corridors, mining and lumbering sites, as well as plenty of forests and lakes. As with the ATV trail system, varieties of establishments offer food, beverages, gas and lodging along the journey. Experienced riders may visit scenic outlooks.

The Iron County Forestry Department contracts with the White Thunder Riders and the Mercer SnoGoers to maintain 303 miles of snowmobile trails throughout the County.



**Figure 12:** ATV/UTV Trails

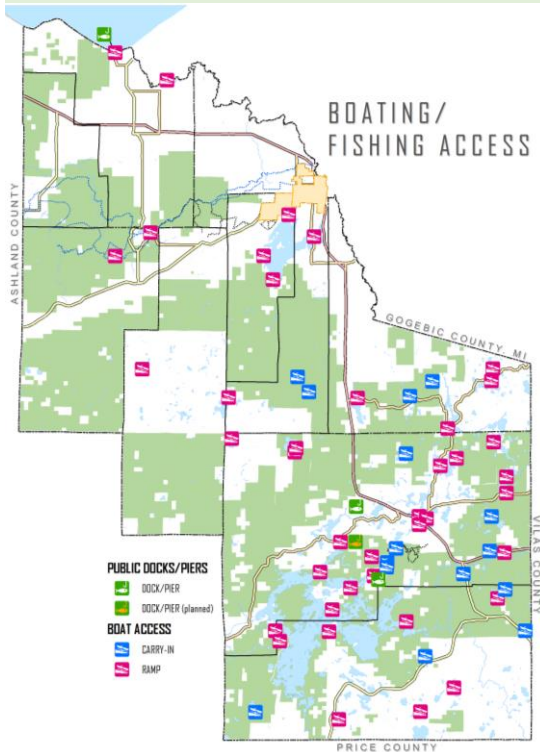


**Figure 13:** Snowmobile Trails

## FISHING

### Boat Landings

There are a number of boat landings found within Iron County. Many are county and state owned, offering access to spectacular lakes as large as Lake Superior and as small as Lake Obadash. The number of landings located at each lake is listed. Depending on the lake, landings may be paved or rustic and vary from powerboat use to canoe.



**Figure 14:** Boating/Fishing Access

**Table 7:** Iron County Lakes with Public Boating Access

Lake	Lake	Lake
Bass Lake	Lake Obadash	Randall Lake
Bearskull Lake	Lake of the Falls	Sandy Beach Lake
Beaver Lake	Lake One	Saskatoon Lake
Brandis Lake	Lake Six	Saxon Falls
Cedar Lake	Little Moose	Saxon Harbor
Deer Lake	L. Turtle Flowage	Shay's Dam
Deer Tail Lake	Long Lake	Shirley Lake
Du Page Lake	McDermott Lake	Spider Lake
Echo Lake	Mercer Lake	Tamarack Lake
Fisher Lake	Moose Lake	Trude Lake
Fox Lake	Mud Lake	Turtle Flambeau
Gile Flowage	North Bass Lake	Twin Lakes
Grand Portage Lake	One Man Lake	Upton Lake
Hewitt Lake	Owl Lake	Weber Lake
Island Lake	Pike Lake	Wilson Lake
Lake Evelyn	Pine Lake	
Lake O'Brien	Plunkett Lake	

**Source:** Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 2016. Statewide inventory of public boat access and fishing sites. *Note: Public access data may not be complete and additional access points may exist.*



## BICYCLING

### Bike Routes

The Wisconsin State Bike Map, published and distributed through the Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin, identifies and classifies state and county roads in terms of their bicycling conditions. The bicycle map for Iron County can be accessed on the WisDOT web site at <http://wisconsindot.gov/Documents/travel/bike/bike-maps/county/iron.pdf>

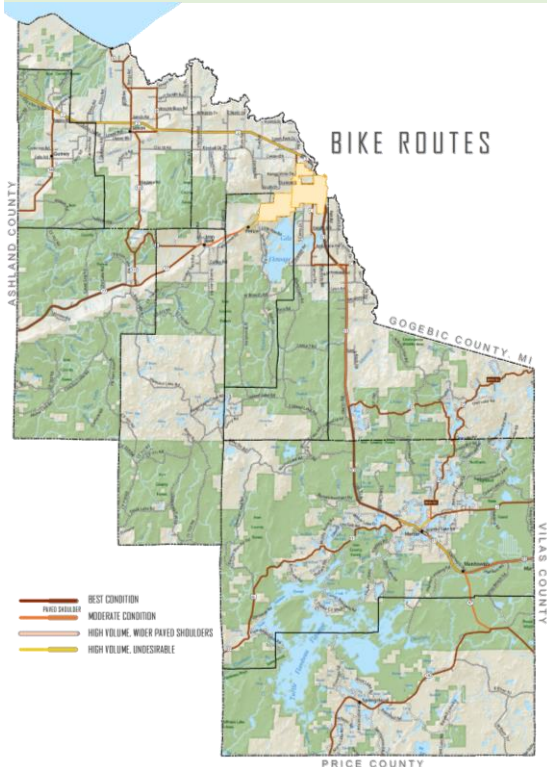


Figure 15: Bike Routes

## GOLF

### Eagle Bluff Golf Club

Public, 18-hole golf course located in Hurley. The course features 5,870 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par of 70.

### Skye Golf Course

The 18-hole "Whitecap Skye" course at the Skye Golf in the Whitecap Mountains facility in Upson, features 5,320 yards of golf from the longest tees for a par of 70.

### Tahoe Lynx Golf Course

This 9-hole public golf course in Mercer opened in 1994 and measures 2606 yards from the longest tees. The course features 3 sets of tees for different skill levels.

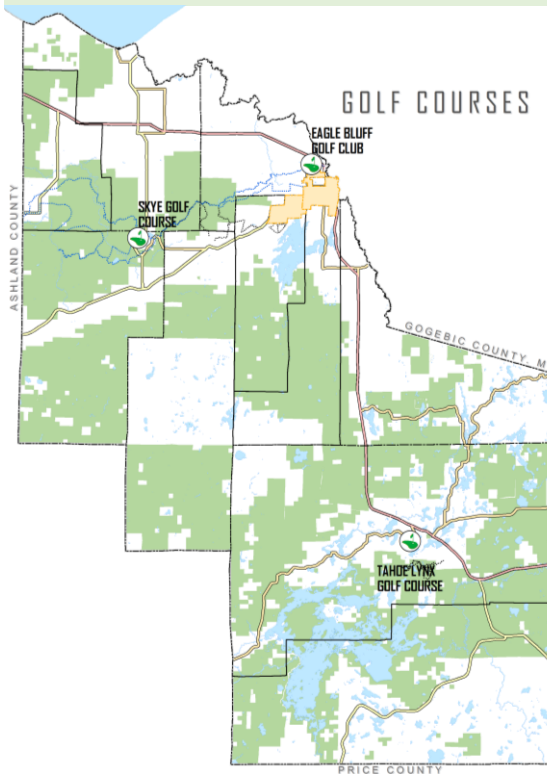


Figure 16: Golf Courses

## SCENIC SITES/POINTS OF INTEREST

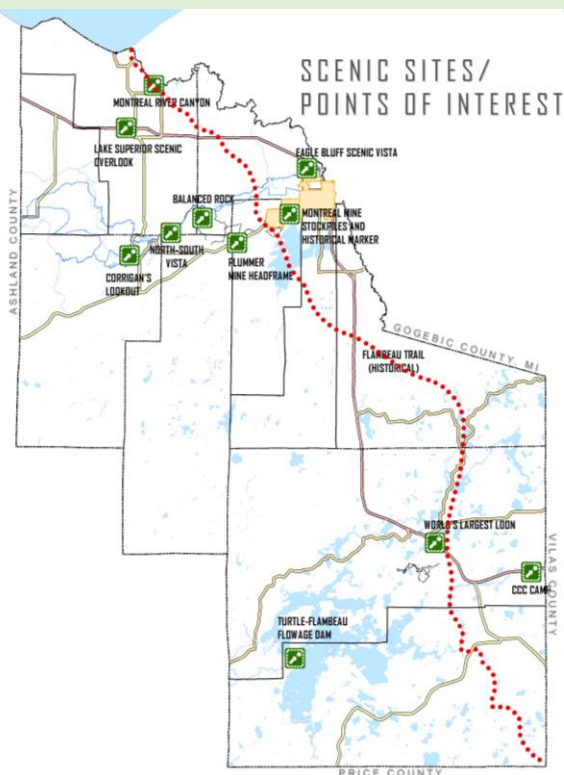
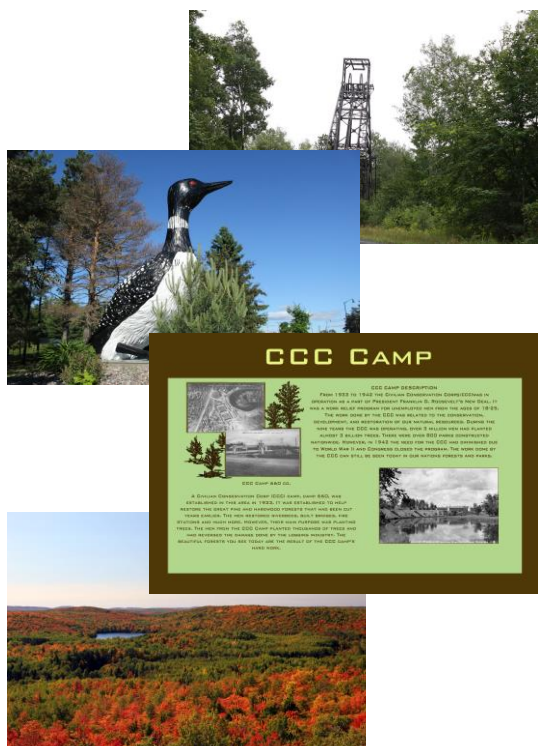


Figure 17: Scenic Sites/Points of Interest



### Montreal River Canyon

Scenic and remote canyon on the Montreal River in northern Iron County. The canyon's contains high sheer rock walls straddle whitewater rapids (class II – class V) and boulder gardens which make this a destination for adventurous whitewater rafters. Located on private property.

### Lake Superior Scenic Overlook

WisDOT overlook and rest area along US Highway 2.

### Corrigan's Lookout

Rock outcrop overlooking Upson Lake and the Penokee Hills. Located on Iron County Forest lands, near Upson.

### North-South Vista

Scenic views of the Penokee Hills landscape. ATV & snowmobile access via Trail 6.

### Balanced Rock

Natural geologic feature located near the midpoint of the Uller Trail. ATV & snowmobile access via Trail 6.

### Plummer Mine Headframe

The Plummer Mine Headframe is the last standing headframe in Wisconsin, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### Eagle Bluff Scenic Vista

A spectacular vista of two states and Lake Superior. South of U.S. 2 on County D at the Eagle Bluff Golf Club, one mile west of Hurley.

### Montreal Mine Stockpiles and Historical Marker

Neat white frame houses, gently curving streets, and gracious landscaping mark the City of Montreal—the only planned mining company town in Wisconsin.

### World's Largest Loon

Statue of Claire d'Loon", the world's largest loon, in front of the Mercer Chamber of Commerce.

### Turtle-Flambeau Dam

Dam constructed in 1926 on the Flambeau River which created the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage.

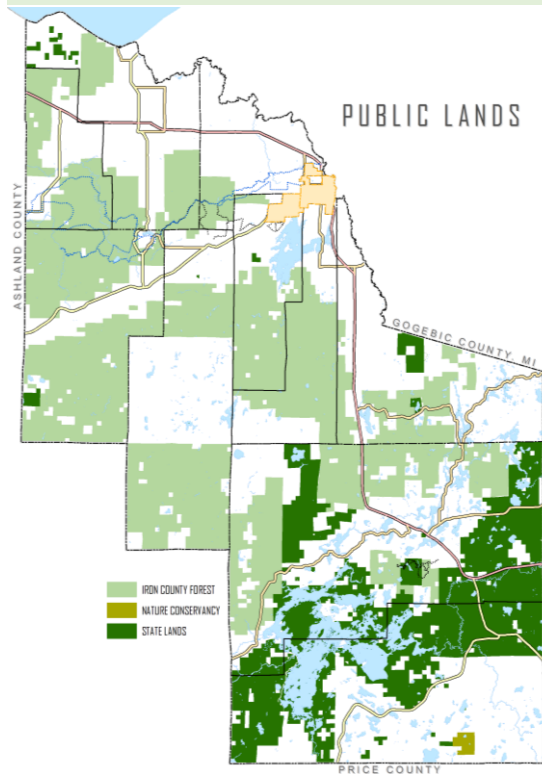
### Flambeau Trail

Historical travel trade route trips from La Pointe, on Madeline Island, to Lac du Flambeau, 90 miles to the south.

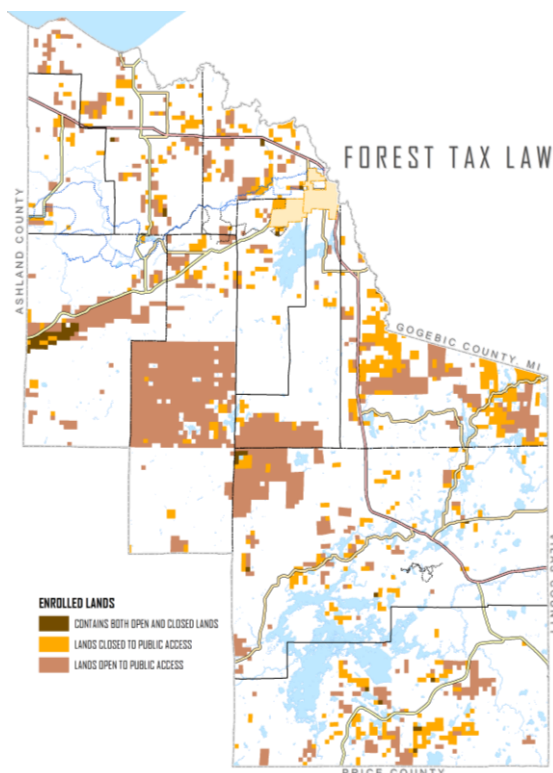
### CCC Camp (Mercer Trail)

Historical site of former Civilian Conservation Corp camp 660 established along the Manitowish River in the Town of Mercer.

## PUBLIC ACCESS LANDS



**Figure 18:** Public Lands



**Figure 19:** Forest Tax Law Lands

### Iron County Forest

Encompassing over 176,000 acres, the Iron County Forest is an actively managed, working forest that provides tremendous recreational opportunities, jobs and timber products.

### State Forest

The State of Wisconsin owns and manages over 85,000 acres of public access lands in Iron County, including the 35,500 acre Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area.

### Nature Conservancy Lands

The Bass Lake Preserve in southern Iron County contains a diversity of trees, including aspen, sugar and red maple, yellow and white birch. This area was designated as a State Natural Area in 1986.

### Forest Tax Law

Approximately 64,000 acres of privately-owned lands enrolled in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law programs are open to public access and recreation. These programs encourage sustainable forest management on private lands by providing a property tax incentive to landowners. Two different forest tax law programs currently exist: the Managed Forest Law (MFL) and the Forest Crop Law (FCL).

## STATE OWNED AND MANAGED PROPERTIES

### **Underwood State Wildlife Area (SWA)**

Located in the Town of Oma, the Underwood State Wildlife Area is a 1,600 acre state-owned tract managed primarily for wildlife species such as ruffed grouse, deer, woodcock, bears, and wolves. Habitat types found within this area include forested uplands and cedar swamps.

### **Hay Creek-Hoffman Lake Wildlife Area (SWA)**

This SWA encompasses portions of Ashland and Iron Counties. Within Iron County, the Wildlife Area is found within the Town of Sherman and a small portion of the Town of Mercer. The total acreage of this SWA is 13,424 acres, with 7,412 acres in Iron County. This SWA provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife species including ruffed grouse, deer, woodcock, bears, loons, waterfowl, beavers, otters, fishers, coyotes, bobcat, muskrats, ospreys, eagles, and timber wolves.

### **Moose Lake State Natural Area (SNA)**

The Moose Lake SNA encompasses 1,113 acres within the Town of Mercer. This area contains high quality forest with several patches of old-growth hemlock forest. This SNA also contains rare plants and an important warbler breeding area. Frog Lake and Pines State Natural Area (SNA) This 192-acre SNA located in the Town of Mercer features an undisturbed wilderness lake surrounded by old-growth northern dry-mesic forest in a large lowland bordering the Manitowish River. This SNA is located entirely within the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest.

### **Bass Lake Preserve State Natural Area (SNA)**

This 30-acre preserve is located within the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest in the Town of Sherman. This property features a wilderness type lake, conifer swamp and bog and northern hardwoods forest.

### **Lake Evelyn State Natural Area (SNA)**

The Lake Evelyn State Natural Area encompasses 26 acres in Section 23, T44N R3E, in the Town of Oma. This SNA features an undeveloped soft-water seepage lake surrounded by wetlands and upland forest.

### **Caroline Lake State Natural Area (SNA)**

The Caroline Lake SNA is located in T44N-R1W, Section 19, in the Town of Anderson. This SNA encompasses 118 total acres of northern hardwoods, conifer, wetland, and mixed forest. Caroline lake also forms the headwaters of the Bad River and contains unique plant communities and forested wetlands.

### **Springstead Muskeg State Natural Area (SNA)**

The Springstead Muskeg SNA is a large peatland featuring an extensive undisturbed bog located at the headwaters area of the South Fork of the Flambeau River. This SNA encompasses 200 acres in Section 28 of the Town of Sherman.



**Powell Marsh Wildlife Area (SWA)**

This SWA lies within the boundary of the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest on the western edge of the Town of Sherman. Since 1980, management activities in this SWA have focused on enhancing habitat for waterfowl and sharp-tailed grouse. Total acreage of this SWA within Iron County is approximately 105 acres.

**Turtle-Flambeau Flowage State Natural Area (SNA)**

This 3,145 SNA is found in the Towns of Mercer and Sherman in Iron County. The Flowage was created in 1926 by the inundation of lowland wetlands and contains numerous unique and varied plant and animal communities.

**Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area**

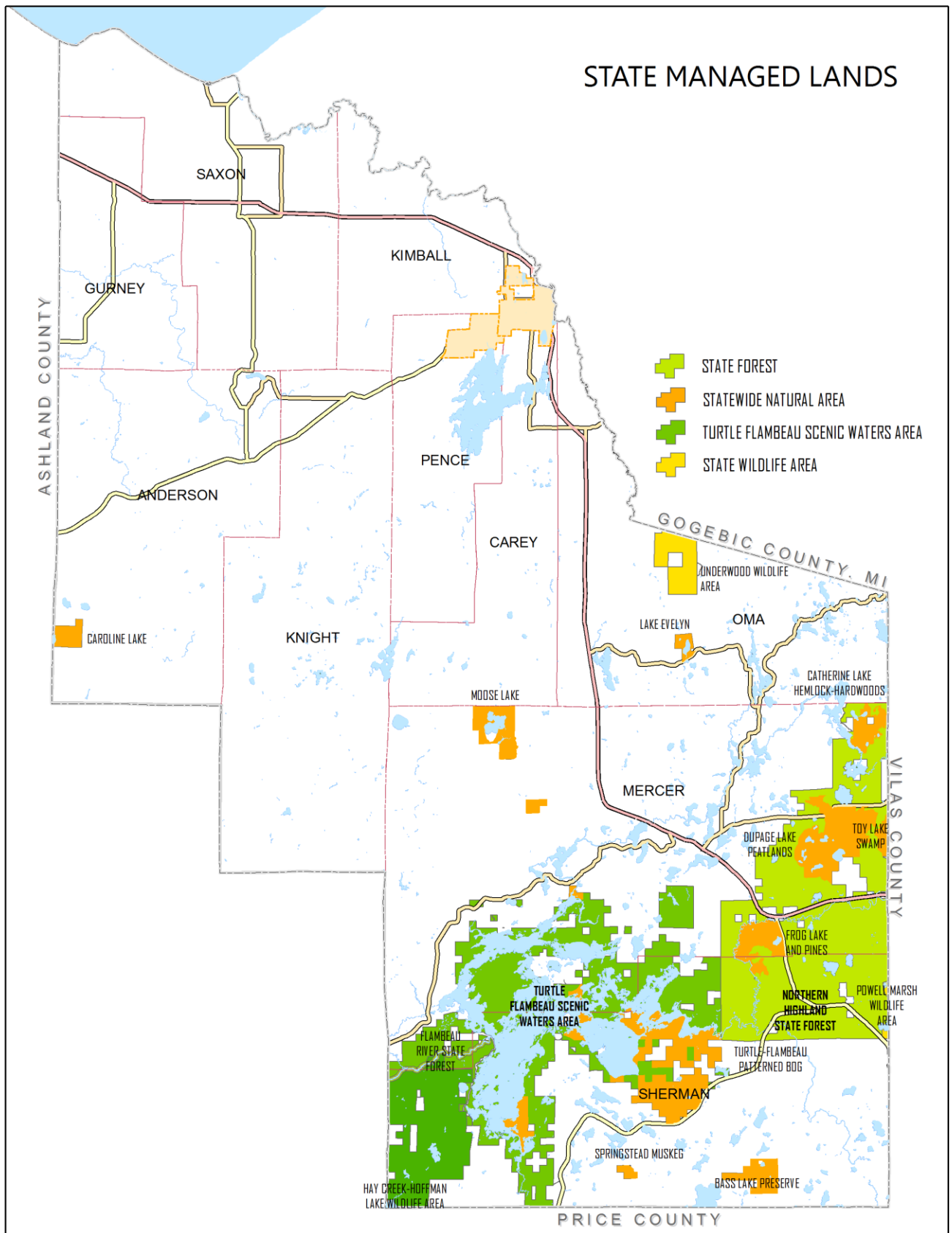
The Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area contains several thousand state-owned acres of water and miles of undeveloped shoreline. The Flowage itself is a 19,000-acre reservoir with 212 miles of predominantly wilderness shoreline. This area is a popular recreation destination for those seeking fishing and wilderness camping experiences. This area includes the once separate Boot Lake State Wildlife Area.

**Northern Highland American Legion State Forest**

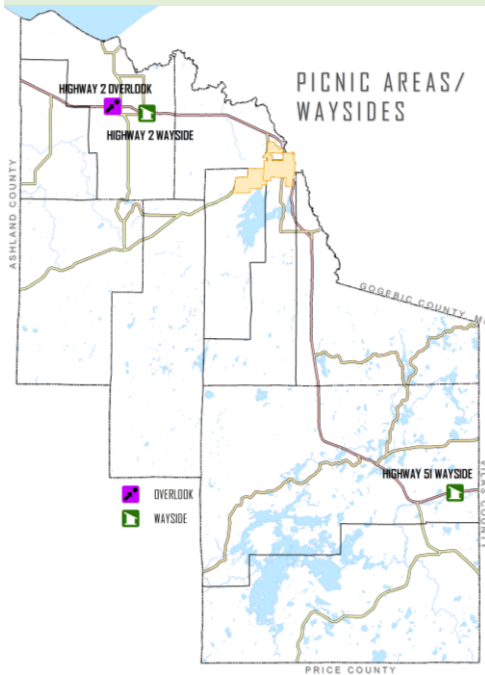
This state forest was established in 1925 to protect the streamflow at the headwaters of the Wisconsin, Flambeau and Manitowish Rivers. The NHAL State Forest is the largest in Wisconsin, encompassing over 222,000 acres in Vilas, Oneida and Iron Counties. Within Iron County there are approximately 30,000 acres of land within the NHAL State Forest.

**Flambeau River State Forest**

The Flambeau River State Forest was established in 1930. This forest occupies a total of 90,000 acres of land surrounding the North and South Forks of the Flambeau River. Within Iron County, this forest occupies about 335 total acres.



## WAYSIDES/PICNIC AREAS



**Figure 20:** Picnic Areas/Waysides

### **Highway 2 Overlook (Apostle Islands)**

WisDOT overlook along US Highway 2 in the Town of Saxon. No facilities.

### **Highway 2 Wayside**

WisDOT wayside along US Highway 2 in the Town of Saxon. Interpretive signage and limited day-use facilities are present.

### **Highway 51 Wayside**

WisDOT wayside along US Highway 51 in the Town of Mercer.

## LOCAL EVENTS/FESTIVALS



**Figure 21:** Public Events

### **Iron County Fair**

The Iron County Fair is one of the best small county fairs in Wisconsin. Located in the town of Saxon, the fair offers a multitude of activities for every age. Activities include, agricultural exhibits, animals, rides, food, entertainment, midway rides and games, and other fun.

### **Paavo Nurmi Marathon**

Named for the Finnish winner of nine Olympic gold medals in the 1920s, this marathon draws about 300 participants annually. It starts in Upson, WI and finishes in downtown Hurley. It was established in 1969 and is considered to be the oldest running marathon in Wisconsin.

### **Loon Day**

An annual art & craft show in Mercer with more than 250 exhibitors. Loon calling contest (trophies awarded), food, music, dancing, demonstrations, sidewalk and bake sales, face painting for kids and a flea market

### **SISU Ski Fest (Ironwood, MI)**

XC Ski races and snowshoe events, held annually.

### **Festivale Italiano**

Annual family fun event held in Hurley celebrating Italian heritage.

### **Heritage Festival**

Two weeks of events to celebrate Iron County's rich cultural heritage. Held annually.

### **Musky Fishing Challenge**

A catch and release musky fishing tournament that allows the use of both artificial and live bait. Held annually in Mercer

### **Lupine Junefest**

Annual festival held in Mercer, featuring bike/hike tours, live music, arts/crafts, silent auction, photography, informational booth and classic car show.

### **Mercer Open All-Species Fishing Tournament**

Fishing, Trade Show, Demos, and Live Music. Held in Mercer

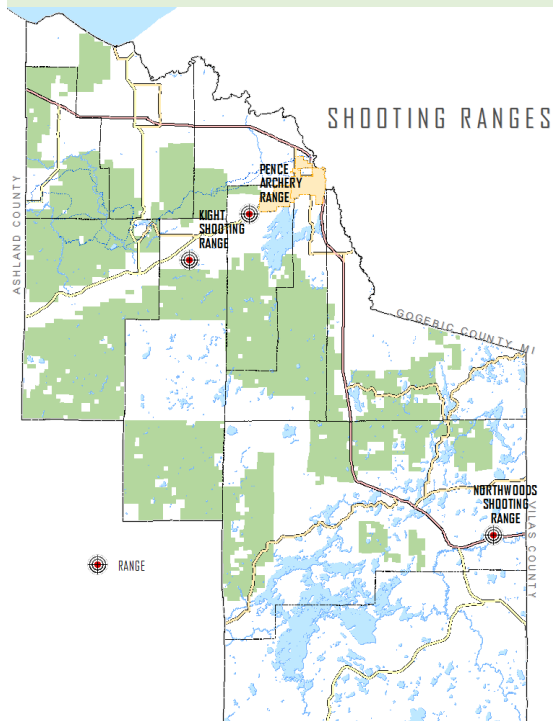
### **Saxon Harbor Fishing Tournament**

Annual spring fishing tournament on Lake Superior.

### **Winterfest (MECCA)**

Turtle River Pursuit & Snowshoe tour

## SHOOTING RANGES



**Figure 22:** Shooting Ranges

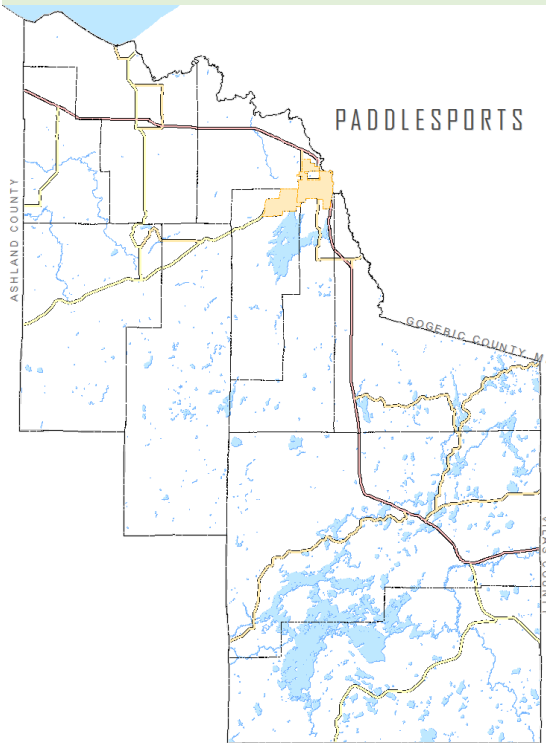
### **Northwood's Shooting Range**

The Northwood's Shooting Range is maintained by the Northwood's Wildlife & Wetlands Club and is open to the public from April 1 to November 30. The range is located five miles south of Mercer, just off Hwy 51 on Range Road. The facility includes a 200-yard rifle and 100-yard pistol range and field course. Shooting events are held weekly throughout the summer.

### **The Knight Shooting Range**

The Knight Shooting Range is located on Snake Track Road, two miles southwest of Iron Belt. This range is open to the public, and shooting benches and target backstops are provided.

## PADDLESPTS



**Figure 23:** Paddlesports

### Inland Lakes and Streams

Iron County has 217 named inland lakes along with 277 smaller, unnamed lakes totaling 29,902 acres of surface water. The county also has 724 miles of perennial streams.

### Turtle River Trail

The 27-mile Turtle River Trail connects 17 different lakes. There are many put-in and take-out possibilities on the Turtle River offering a wide variety of trips

### Bear River

This trip is tranquil and unspoiled by development. Only one low hazard rapids, better described as a "riffle," will be encountered at the second bridge crossing. The usual put-in is below the outlet of Flambeau Lake. This makes for a 25-mile paddle to the Murray's landing take-out.

### Manitowish River

This 20-mile route is a continuation of the popular Manitowish trip that begins at High Lake (Vilas County) at the river's origin on County Road B east of Presque Isle.

### Gile Flowage

Gile Flowage, a 3,380-acre lake in northern Iron County, is the last large underdeveloped "Laurentian Shield" lake in Wisconsin. Most of the shoreline is ancient exposed bedrock and the flowage is dotted with bedrock islands reminiscent of the Boundary Waters and Quetico canoe- country region of northern Minnesota.

### Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area

The Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area encompasses over 38,000 acres with its star attraction being the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. A voluntary quiet area has been established on approximately the eastern one-fifth of the Flowage.

### Montreal River – West Branch

Expert-only paddle route which includes high hazard Class V rapids, dams and inaccessible canyon-like areas.

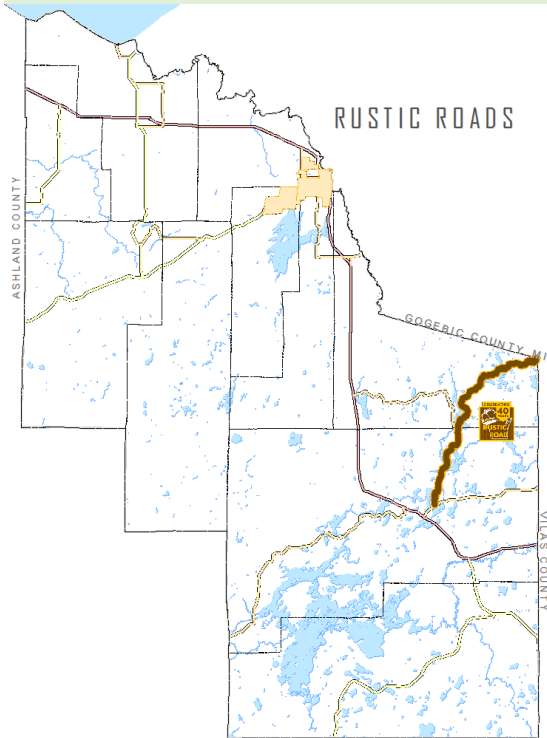
### Lake Superior Water Trail (LSWT)

The LSWT is a network of mapped access points and recreational resources along Wisconsin's Lake Superior south shore. The water trail provides a framework for a wealth of environmental, historical, and cultural experiences accessible along the Lake Superior coastline. A kayak launch is available at Saxon Harbor.

## RUSTIC ROADS

### Rustic Road 100

A 13.5 mile designated Rustic Road extending from County Highway G from the Michigan/Wisconsin border, continuing south along County Highway H to Mercer. This route along part of the historic Flambeau Trail is Wisconsin's 100<sup>th</sup> designated Rustic Road.



**Figure 24:** Rustic Roads



## OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To ensure that the needs of the public are served by this plan, a significant amount of time has been expressed gaining public input into the plan development. Gaining public input and support is a critical element to assessing the needs, development and implementation of this outdoor recreation plan.



















### RECREATION NEEDS STANDARDS

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) identify standards for designing recreation facilities. The NRPA suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a “core” system of parklands, with a total of **6.25 to 10.5 acres** of developed open space per **1,000 population**. The size and amount of “adjunct” parklands will vary from community to community but must be taken into account when considering a total, well-rounded system of parks and recreation areas.

While not classified as parks *per se*, public lands including county and state forestlands provide many of the same park functions in terms of providing open space for a wide range of outdoor activities. Using the NRFA definition, Iron County would need between 37.0 and 59.1 acres of parks to satisfy the demands of county residents. Considering that Iron County has more than 230,000 acres of public recreation land available, the resource is more than sufficient to meet current and projected demands for residents and visitors alike.

### PUBLIC INPUT ASSESSMENT

An online survey was developed requesting information from the public regarding their personal interest in the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation in Iron County. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a press release was also submitted and published in the Iron County Miner. Social media was also used to distribute the survey link and solicit comments. The online survey became active on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and remained active until April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A total of 356 unique responses were recorded. A letter was mailed to city and town elected officials on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, requesting community input in the recreation plan (see appendix). A similar letter of was sent to the following key recreation stakeholders, school districts and interest groups in Iron County.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Bad River Tribal Council        |  Iron County Lakes & Rivers Alliance        |
|  Eagle Bluff Golf Course         |  Iron County Trail Safety Committee         |
|  Fat Tire Bike Club              |  Iron County Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts |
|  Friends of the Gile Flowage     |  Iron County Recreation Council             |
|  Frontier Campground             |  Iron County UW-Extension                   |
|  Gogebic Range Health Foundation |  Lac Du Flambeau Tribal Council             |
|  Hurley Area Chamber of Commerce |  Loon Lagoon                                |
|  Hurley School District          |  MECCA Ski Club                             |
|  Iron County ATV Association     |  |
|  Iron County Development Zone    |  |

- ✚ Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce
- ✚ Mercer Dusty Loons
- ✚ Mercer School District
- ✚ Mercer SnoGoers
- ✚ NICER
- ✚ North Country Trail Association
- ✚ Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest
- ✚ Northland Wildlife & Wetlands Club
- ✚ Penokee Rangers
- ✚ Saxon Harbor Boating Club

- ✚ Tahoe Lynx
- ✚ Turtle Flambeau Flowage Business Owners Assoc
- ✚ Turtle Flambeau Flowage Lake Association
- ✚ Turtle Flambeau Flowage – Trude Lake
- ✚ White Thunder Riders
- ✚ Whitecap Resort
- ✚ Whitecap Kayak
- ✚ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

## **PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY**

### **Recreation Uses**

Popular outdoor recreation opportunities included:

- ATVing/UTVing
- Waterfall Viewing
- Fishing
- Boating
- Hiking
- Snowmobiling
- Kayaking
- Snowshoeing
- Road/Paved Biking
- Hunting
- Cross Country Skiing
- Camping
- Birding
- Other Water Sports
- Downhill Skiing
- Mountain Biking
- Playgrounds
- Horseback Riding

Key “other” identified recreational uses included hunting/nature activities, running, golfing, geochaching, pickleball, dirt bike/OHM riding.

## **Facilities Demand**

In terms of county-owned and managed facilities, the most visited/used facilities identified in the survey include Saxon Harbor, campgrounds, ATV/UTV trails, boat landings, snowmobile trails, Potato River Falls, and Lake of the Falls County Park. Developed county parks also tended to receive much higher usage/visitation rates than minimally developed or primitive sites. The most popular boat landings included those on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, Gile Flowage and Saxon Harbor.

Local waterfalls, Montreal Trails, the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and the Gile Flowage were the most popular non-county-owned or managed facilities or resources in Iron County.

## **Facilities Satisfaction**

In terms of overall satisfaction with the condition of county-owned and managed facilities, 89 percent of survey respondents said they were either very or somewhat satisfied.

## **Public Water Access**

More than 67 percent of survey respondents indicated that Iron County currently has adequate public water access. Less than 10 percent of respondents stated that there are additional needs for public water access in the county, 25 percent had no opinion. When asked where there were public access concerns, respondents identified the following:

1. Gile Flowage CTH C Landing
2. Weber Lake Parking
3. Montreal River
4. Little Oxbow Landing
5. Fisher Lake Landing
6. Turtle Flambeau Flowage Landings

When asked what improvements were needed at public boat landings and water access points, survey respondents indicated issues related to bathrooms, general maintenance, addition/repair or improvement of docks, piers and slips, more aquatic invasive species signage, concerns with the condition of the boat landing itself and parking.

## **Campgrounds**

Nearly 20 percent of survey respondents felt that there is a need for additional campground facilities in Iron County was adequate. Only 7 percent of respondents felt that improvements are needed to existing facilities while 29 percent felt Iron County had an adequate number of campground facilities. Improvements needed most frequently cited included improving/expanding facilities, providing more utilities such as electric and Internet access and general maintenance concerns. When asked where additional camping facilities are needed, respondents listed the following:

1. Gile Flowage
2. Remote camping
3. Casey Sag area
4. Additional ATV/UTV friendly campgrounds

When asked what general concerns they had about county-owned campgrounds, survey respondents most often cited issues related to the camping experience (noise, privacy, visual), need for expanding opportunities (adding additional sites, backcountry opportunities, adding trails, etc.), and additional dump stations.

### **Snowmobile Trails**

Nearly 64 percent of survey respondents felt that Iron County has an adequate number of snowmobile trails. The need for additional signage, addressing safety and trespassing, relocating trails off of routes and private land and onto public land when possible and expanding trails into new areas were commented on most often as concerns.

### **ATV/UTV Trails**

One half (50%) of survey respondents felt that Iron County has an adequate number of ATV/UTV trails. Nearly 20 percent had no opinion and 30 percent felt more trails are needed most often commented in the southern part of the County. The most frequently expressed improvements needed included better signage, trail maintenance and a need for grading to fix rough trails. When asked to provide other concerns regarding ATV/UTV trails, respondents cited adding or expanding trails and allowing multi-use on existing trails (OHV/dirt bikes), the need for additional enforcement, and the need for a special use area with mud, sand, obstacles, etc.

### **Ski Trails**

Nearly 24 percent of survey respondents felt that Iron County has an adequate number of kilometers of cross-country ski trails. Nearly 60 percent of respondents had no opinion. When asked to provide other concerns regarding ski trails, respondents cited the need to expand trails and develop new trails and keeping snowmobiles off of the trails.

### **Bike Trails**

Over 32 percent of survey respondents felt that Iron County needs additional bike trails with 46 percent with no opinion. When asked to identify improvements needed, respondents cited construction of a bike trail between Hurley and Mercer and west to Montreal, the need for mountain bike trails, continue the Mercer trail to CTH J & W and just generally adding more bike trails.

## **Expanding Recreational Opportunities**

Survey respondents were asked to identify recreational opportunities which the county should explore or investigate for possible future development. The most cited opportunity was the expansion of biking across the county, including the development new of trails for both mountain and road biking (paved). Another highly cited activity was the expansion of walking/hiking opportunities, including the development of new hiking/walking trails. Increasing opportunities for dual sport motorcycling was also highly cited. This activity involves motorcycles that are designed for both on and off-road use, which are currently not-permitted on the ATV/UTV trail system. A number of other recreational opportunities were identified including development and/or expansion of:

1. Kayak/Canoe
2. Other Recreation (swimming, dogsledding, etc.)
3. Remote Camping
4. Motorcycling
5. Horse Trails
6. Pickleball
7. Nature/Birding
8. Disc Golf
9. Camping
10. Snowshoe
11. Shooting Range
12. Rock Climbing
13. Dog Park
14. Skate Park
15. Winter Camping

## **Demographics**

### **Residency of Respondents**

- 47% Live in & own property in Iron County
- 1 % Live in but do not own property in Iron County
- 26% Own property but do not live in Iron County
- 27% Do not live in or own property in Iron County

### **Residency of Respondents living in Iron County**

- 27% Mercer
- 8% Oma
- 5.5% Hurley
- 3.5% and less made up each of the other towns

### **Age of Respondents**

- 22% 65+
- 27% 55-64
- 22% 45-54
- 19% 35-44

- 7% 25-34
- 2% 18-24

**How far respondents travel to recreate in Iron County**

- 36% 1-25 miles
- 15% 26-75 miles
- 9% 76-150 miles
- 13% 151-250 miles
- 24% 251+ miles

**How much respondents spend per day recreating in Iron County**

- 24% \$0-\$25
- 30% \$26-\$75
- 23% \$76-\$125
- 15% \$126-\$200
- 6% \$201-\$300
- 3% \$301-\$400

**Annual household income of respondents**

- 17% over \$150,000
- 22% \$100,000 - \$150,000
- 20% \$75,000 - \$99,000
- 21% \$50,000 - \$75,000
- 14% \$30,000 - \$50,000
- 4% \$15,000 - \$30,000
- 2% Under \$15,000

## COMMUNITY INPUT

### TOWN & MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION ASSETS

MCD	PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES			
	NAME	TYPE	AMENITIES AVAILABLE	IMPROVEMENTS MADE (LAST 5 YEARS)
<b>TOWN OF CAREY</b>	Island Lake Boat Landing	Boat Landing		
<b>TOWN OF KIMBALL</b>	Kimball Town Park & Falls	Park	Picnic Tables, Handicap Toilet, Grills, Fire Pits, Basketball Court, Playground Equipment, Handicap Fishing Deck, Pavilion, Electrical Power, Walk-in Accessible, Walking Trail	Bear proof trash cans
	Softball/Volley ball Field	Field Area		
	Interstate Falls Park	Park		Viewing platform, hiking trail, benches, railings, stairs, kiosk, picnic tables, handicap accessible portapotty, bear proof trash cans
	Kimball Community Center	Community Center	Multi-use hall, bar, kitchen, basketball court	Playground, benches, picnic tables, lighting upgraded on basketball court, caution & safety signs
<b>TOWN OF KNIGHT</b>	Community Center	Community Center	Picnic Tables, playground	
	Snake Track Shooting Range	Shooting Range	Shooting Benches	DNR owned



MCD	PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES			
	NAME	TYPE	AMENITIES AVAILABLE	IMPROVEMENTS MADE (LAST 5 YEARS)
TOWN OF OMA	Oma Town Park	Park, Boat Landing	Boat Landing on Pine Lake, swimming, Pier, Open space, Pavilion, Picnic Tables, Grills Playground, Paved Parking, Pit Toilets	Extended boat landing pad 12', painted pavilion and pit toilets, updated signage, added 3 grills and 3 picnic tables, new pier
	Oma Community Forest	80 acres of undisturbed woodland recreation area	Unimproved road access adjacent to US Hwy 51	None

## TOWN & MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION ASSETS PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENTS 2021-2025

FUTURE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS DESIRED FROM JANUARY 2021 TO DECEMBER 2025. (SUCH AS PLANNED TRAILS OR OTHER NEW RECREATION SITES).	
<b>TOWN OF CAREY</b>	Improvements to the Island Lake boat landing are needed.
<b>TOWN OF GURNEY</b>	Improvements to the Community Park, playground equipment, picnic tables and ballfield.
<b>TOWN OF KIMBALL</b>	Expanding our trail system at Interstate Falls.
	Expanding our Community Center.
	Expanding the playgrounds at Community Center and at Kimball Falls Park.
	Improving all existing trail systems.
	Adding new pads at Interstate Falls Park.
	Upgrading small foot bridge at Interstate Falls Park.
<b>TOWN OF KNIGHT</b>	Add picnic tables at the Community Center.
	Construct small pavilion.
<b>TOWN OF OMA</b>	Renovate pit toilets at Town Park.
	Replace pavilion at Town Park with modern structure that is ADA compliant.

## TOWN & MUNICIPAL INPUT ON COUNTYWIDE AND LOCAL RECREATIONAL PLANNING ISSUES

MCD	WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE RECREATIONAL ISSUES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?	HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ADDRESS THE LOCAL RECREATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED.	ARE THERE OTHER TYPES OF RESOURCES THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOUR COMMUNITY IN PLANNING & IMPLEMENTING OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS?
<b>TOWN OF CAREY</b>			
<b>TOWN OF GURNEY</b>	Lack of cross-country ski trails & walking trails.	Need Funding	More Funding
	Dust from ATV/UTV trails.		
<b>TOWN OF KIMBALL</b>	COVID-19 activity restrictions	We have completed a town survey of residents for further planning.	Funding
	Determining top recreation needs vs Town budget	Searching for opportunities as available.	A centralized county committee or group comprised of representatives from each entity to tackle the issue on a strength through numbers basis.
	Winter recreational opportunities		
<b>TOWN OF KNIGHT</b>	ATV/snowmobile trail & road usage.	Not sure.	
	Trail access from CTH E into Iron Belt		
<b>TOWN OF OMA</b>		Be alert for grant opportunities.	

## CLUB/ORGANIZATIONAL INPUT

WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE RECREATIONAL ISSUES FACING IRON COUNTY?				
CLUB/ORG.	ISSUE 1	ISSUE 2	ISSUE 3	HOW SHOULD RECREATION ISSUES BE STAISFIED?
<b>MERCER DUSTY LOONS</b>	Lack of promoting our trail system. We have a great trail system, but need to market it more.	We need more trails in southern Iron County, including some challenging ones.	Need a "play area" for ATVs/UTVs.	<p>More advertising &amp; promotion.</p> <p>Open up logging trails in southern Iron Co. Put in a play area with several mud pits and hills.</p>
<b>NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION – HERITAGE CHAPTER</b>	Completion of the North Country National Scenic Trail across the County Forest.			<p>Iron Co should continue to support Heritage Chapter of the NCTA.</p> <p>Help the NCTA, NPS, and WDNR acquire the remaining private property gaps along the NCT route in Iron County.</p>
<b>WHITE THUNDER RIDERS</b>	Developing silent sports opportunities without impacting well established motorized trail system.	Loss of trail access as properties are bought and sold.	Development of an online mapping system for both snowmobile and ATV/UTV.	<p>Involve both motorized and non-motorized in planning and development of any new trail system.</p> <p>Secure permanent or long term easements for trails when possible.</p> <p>Create subcommittee of Rec Council to explore options for online mapping systems. Work with WDNR Snowmobile Council as they work on this as well.</p>

WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE RECREATIONAL ISSUES FACING IRON COUNTY?				
CLUB/ORG.	ISSUE 1	ISSUE 2	ISSUE 3	HOW SHOULD RECREATION ISSUES BE STAISFIED?
<b>UW EXTENSION – IRON COUNTY</b>	The need to further develop non-motorized trails.	Help local municipalities expand and maintain recreational facilities.	Expand promotion of recreational opportunities on Iron County.	<p>Work with local non-profits and municipalities to apply for and administer grant funds to expand the Iron Belle Trail into WI.</p> <p>Locate additional hiking &amp; biking trails on public land.</p> <p>Work with county partners to update promotional strategies and resources.</p>

## CLUB/ORGANIZATIONAL RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

	DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS AT COUNTY MANAGED FACILITY OR TRAILS		NEW RECREATION FACILITIES OR TRAILS DESIRED AND FUNDING SOURCES	
CLUB/ORG.	FACILITY OR TRAIL	IMPROVEMENT NEEDED	NEW FACILITIES OR TRAILS	FUNDING SOURCES
<b>MERCER DUSTY LOONS</b>	ATV/UTV Trails	More challenging trails. Picnic areas, gazebos, tables, outhouses & fishing areas with ATV/UTV access.		WDNR Grants
<b>NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION – HERITAGE CHAPTER</b>	North Country Trail	Parking area at northern 169 crossing on ICF land.  Parking area at Hwy 2 crossing on ICF land.  Parking area on Harbor Drive crossing on ICF land.	Public purchase of the Kenyon Trust parcel between Saxon Harbor and Michigan boarder.	KN Stewardship funding, LWCF funding, NCTA Trail Protection grant and private funding.
<b>WHITE THUNDER RIDERS</b>	15a, 2 and others  All  13c	Get trails off of roads/routes.  Public parking/park & ride areas.  Bathroom facility at B-47 Memorial Site.	Relocate Trail 13 onto more upland ground.  Relocate Trail 8 west from W. Branch to eliminate wet areas.  Relocate Trail 11 off of Gerry Rd.	WDNR Grants
<b>UW EXTENSION – IRON COUNTY</b>	Trails to waterfalls  Rustic camping near waterfalls  Signage	Alternate trails to waterfalls where ATV/UTVs are not allowed.  Backpacking and hike-in sites available for tent camping near waterfalls.  Continue to develop signage that promotes & directs people to our County's attractions.		Grant Opportunities

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Findings from the surveys of Iron County citizens, recreation users and outdoor recreation interest groups clearly show a high level of interest in outdoor recreation in Iron County, as well as the need to invest in the development, improvement and maintenance of facilities.

With finite resources available for outdoor recreation, it is critical to prioritize needs across the county. However, funding alone is not the answer. Active partnerships are also essential to meeting the outdoor recreation needs of county residents and visitors. At the core of the county's parks and recreation system are local, state and nonprofit agencies and organizations which can provide the resources and support that will be necessary to continue to grow and maintain the recreation system.

The Iron County Outdoor Recreation Plan Steering Committee, with input from the county's outdoor recreation stakeholders and communities, has identified one overall goal and four supporting objectives which serve as the vision to guide the management and development of Iron County's outdoor recreation base over the next five years. The plan's goals and objectives are implemented through a series of related policies, which guide future decision-making, and specific programs and actions which identify the priorities and outcomes for the next 5-year planning cycle.

### **IRON COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Iron County Forestry Department (ICF) will continue maintenance of existing facilities. Iron County Forestry will increase promotion of recreation opportunities on the Iron County Forest via website, social media, Chambers, maps & brochures. ICF will also explore opportunities to promote outdoor recreation through outreach with local schools. ICF will also continue to assess the need to offer WIFI at the campgrounds as it becomes available. Funding for these activities continue to come from user fees set and assessed by the Forestry Committee annually, grant opportunities when applicable and Iron County.



RESOURCE	ACTIVITY	COST	SOURCE
<b>COUNTY PARKS</b>			
Lake of the Falls	Explore new water supply and add electrical service to sites for Side 2.	Est. \$7,000	To Be Determined
	Assess the need for campground expansion and additional restroom/shower buildings, plan & build if needed.	To Be Determined	Grant funding from WDNR Recreational Boating, Stewardship, Xcel Energy or any other eligible opportunities.
Schomberg Park	Continue maintenance.	To Be Determined	Co Parks Budget
Weber Lake	Construct Pavilion	Est. \$25,000	Co Parks Budget
Saxon Harbor	Explore management options	To Be Determined	Saxon Harbor Revenue
	Explore options for access to east side of Oronto Creek	To Be Determined	ATV/Snowmobile funding, North Country Trail Association
	Assess the need for rustic camping east of Oronto Creek	To Be Determined	Saxon Harbor Budget
Potato River Falls	Additional signage on Hwy 169 and trails within park. Tree and brush removal around viewing platforms.	Est. signing & brushing \$3,000	Unknown
	Upgrade bathroom	Unknown	Unknown
Waterfalls	Continue maintenance of trails and viewing areas.	Unknown	Unknown
<b>NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS</b>			
MECCA	Continue to work in cooperation with MECCA Ski Club in maintaining the MECCA trails by assisting in grant funding opportunities.	Unknown	Grant Funding Opportunities
Uller Trail	Continue to work with Penokee Rangers in maintaining the Uller Trail by providing some labor and equipment and continue to seek grant funding opportunities.	Unknown	Grant Funding Opportunities
	Level trail loops and make them suitable for year around use.	Unknown	Unknown
North Country Trail	Continued cooperation with the North Country Trail Association in expansion of certified portions of NCT.	Unknown	Funding sources from North Country Trail.
Schomberg Park Snowshoe Trail	Continue maintenance. Install footbridges over drainages.	Unknown	Unknown

RESOURCE	ACTIVITY	COST	SOURCE
Hunter walking trails	Continue to maintain the Potato River Grouse Management Area in Saxon/Upson. Continue to improve and develop additional hunting opportunities in cooperation with Ruffed Grouse Society and other interest groups. These trails may also be an opportunity for winter Fat Bike and snowshoeing use.	Unknown	Unknown
Other Projects/Activities	Work with organized interest group to assess the need for mountain bike trails and fat tire bike trails (winter use). Help to plan and develop a trail system within Iron County Forest.	Unknown	Assist in seeking grant funding from WDNR and other sources
	Work with interested groups to continue expansion of Iron Belle Trail.	Unknown	Assist in seeking grant funding from WDNR, Coastal Management, WDOT and any other sources.
	Work with WisDOT to install bike trails or lanes when highways are rebuilt.	Unknown	WisDOT
	Explore the possibility of a bike path from Hurley to Mercer.	Unknown	Unknown
	Explore areas for additional campgrounds.	Unknown	Unknown
	Cooperate with interest groups and Chambers on special events and races with the use of County Forest for resources and event locations.	Unknown	Unknown
<b>MOTORIZED TRAILS</b>			
ATV/UTV Trails Snowmobile Trails	Continue maintenance of existing ATV trails in cooperation with the Iron County ATV Association, Mercer Dusty Loons, Mercer Sno-Goers and White Thunder Riders by providing grant administration, labor, equipment and supplies.	Unknown	Funding from WDNR ATV/UTV maintenance and development grants.
	Continue improving signage throughout the system.	Unknown	Funding from WDNR ATV/UTV Maintenance grants.
	Provide trail location assistance, easement acquisition, engineering and development, construction, funding opportunities and administration of required ATV trail relocations with priority of placement on public lands where possible.	Unknown	Unknown

RESOURCE	ACTIVITY	COST	SOURCE
ATV/UTV Trails Snowmobile Trails	Continue assessment of existing trails and bridges and assist clubs in engineering, construction, funding opportunities and administration of rehab projects needed on existing ATV trails.	Unknown	WDNR ATV & Snowmobile Grants
	Work with Enbridge to construct a trail from Gurney to Mellen in conjunction with Line 5 relocation.	Unknown	WDNR ATV & Snowmobile Grants