

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

This chapter describes those alternatives, along with their anticipated impacts, that were *considered by the DNR planning team but not selected* during the development of this master plan.

LAND MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The resource assessment of the properties included in the NES plan that the department conducted prior to initiating the NES master planning process determined that the overall current land management objectives and actions on the properties were appropriate and should generally be continued. No new resource management objectives (alternative management purposes) were identified for consideration in the planning process.

During the planning process, the planning team evaluated the assessment data and determined the most appropriate actions for protecting and perpetuating high-value resources and general habitats and recreational environments. The proposed master plan maintains the overall current resource management focus on each property and adds language to provide additional protection or enhancement of high-value natural resources that were identified in the resource assessment process. The result is that these resources are now more precisely defined and managed under the proposed plan. Thus, the planning team did not consider any significant land management alternatives.

PUBLIC USE ALTERNATIVES

RECREATIONAL FACILITY DEVELOPMENT ON SPREAD EAGLE BARRENS STATE NATURAL AREA

During the plan initiation public input process, the department received various requests for recreational activities on Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area (SNA). At over 8,000 acres in size, Spread Eagle Barrens is the second largest SNA in the state, and portions of the property that were acquired from Florence County have a history of public use. While the primary purpose of SNAs is to preserve the best examples of the state's diverse natural communities, recreational uses that do not threaten the site's natural values are allowed. Accordingly, the planning team evaluated various recreational enhancements on the property, including: mapping existing access ways as trail networks; developing new hiking/interpretive trails or routes; and camping.

Spread Eagle Barrens has many access ways – designated and undesignated roads, trails, firebreaks, etc. – that provide motorized and non-motorized access to the property. Some of these access ways are mapped, maintained seasonally, and designated, but most are not. Many of the property's prescribed burning breaks and interior property management trails are maintained periodically (i.e., annually, semi-annually) and currently serve as informal hunter walking or hiking trails for property users. The planning team considered identifying and mapping these additional access ways. The team also considered providing additional primitive camping on the property, or moving the existing campsite to a different area of the property.

Spread Eagle Barrens is managed to restore and maintain pine barrens and bracken grassland, rare natural communities for which this property presents one of the best opportunities in the state. Pine barrens and bracken grassland require regular active management (prescribed fire, timber harvesting, etc.) to restore

and maintain. Due to the management-intensive nature of these communities, the focus for DNR staff assigned to this property is to maintain existing barrens and expand barrens restoration where possible. Therefore, the master plan recommends the status quo for recreational facilities at Spread Eagle Barrens, with most available resources targeted for wildlife habitat and natural community management work. Additional annual or semi-annual maintenance of specific burn breaks and interior management trails will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES ANALYSIS PROPERTY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A [Recreation Opportunities Analysis \(ROA\)](#) recently conducted by the department identified existing outdoor-based recreation opportunities and future recreation needs in each of eight recreation regions around the state. The study identified future needs for providing high-quality recreation experiences and evaluated the potential role of department properties in helping meet those needs. The recreation regions covering the NES EL properties were completed in 2017 and 2018. Most of the properties in the NES EL plan are included in the Upper Lake Michigan Coastal recreation region (WDNR 2018b); two properties fall into the Northwoods recreation region (WDNR 2017). In these two ROA reports, four NES EL properties were identified as having the potential to add the following recreational activities:

- **Pine-Popple Wild Rivers:** bicycling – bike touring/road riding
- **Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area:** bicycling – mountain biking/off-road biking
- **Dunbar Barrens State Natural Area:** bicycling – mountain biking/off-road biking
- **Wausaukee Timber Demonstration Forest:** primitive camping

The planning team evaluated the feasibility of adding these recreational activities at these properties, considering property locations, statutory designations, physical characteristics and suitability, features of a high-quality recreation experience, and staff capacity. The team’s analysis concluded that a combination of factors related to these considerations makes these properties unsuitable for the stated activities.

The Pine-Popple Wild Rivers is a remote and rugged property located in a sparsely populated part of the state. The property is long and linear as it follows the corridors of the two rivers, has very few roads suited to bike touring/road biking and no surfaced trails, and little potential to provide linkages between towns, campgrounds, etc., or other features that would create a high-quality experience for users.

Spread Eagle Barrens and Dunbar Barrens are both State Natural Areas (SNAs), properties whose primary purpose is to protect high-quality examples of Wisconsin’s native communities. Both properties have DNR roads open to public motor vehicle access that may also be used by bicyclists. However, fragile barrens vegetation and thin/erodible soils on both these properties make them unsuitable for constructed single-track trails that would create a high-quality experience for this user group, and potential damage to rare natural communities conflicts with the properties’ statutory purpose.

The Wausaukee Timber Demonstration Forest is part of a network of “Stewardship Demonstration Forests” maintained throughout the state by the Division of Forestry. The purpose of these properties is to demonstrate active timber management and sustainable forest management and provide educational opportunities to students, private woodland owners, and professional foresters related to responsible stewardship and sustainable forestry. The property is small, isolated, and has no existing facilities, and its primary purpose makes it unsuited to development of camping.

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Finally, there is very limited staff capacity to absorb additional workload related to maintenance and inspection of these types of new facilities on any of the four properties. Therefore, the master plan does not recommend development of these activities on these properties.



Badger on Spread Eagle Barrens; photo by Stu Boren