

2023 Annual Report

Ice Age National Scientific Reserve

A cooperative project of the State of Wisconsin and
the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service



Jan. 11, 2024

Photo Credit: Ice Age Trail Alliance

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Significance	4
Economic Impact	4
Overview	5
Ice Age National Scenic Trail	5
Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area	6
Devil's Lake State Park	8
Interstate Park	11
Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit	13
Mill Bluff State Park	16
Cross Plains State Park	18
Current Expenses	20
National Park Service	20
Wisconsin State Park System	20
NPS Funding Shortfall	20
Statement Of Need	21
Recommendations	21
Interpretive Exhibits At Interstate Park	22

Interpretive Panel at Interstate Park. Photo Credit: Matthew Densow



Executive Summary

The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve is a federal-state partnership that was codified in federal law in 1964. The law's stated purpose is "to assure protection, preservation, and interpretation of the nationally significant values of Wisconsin continental glaciation." It is one of the National Park Service's (NPS) oldest partnership parks. Today the Reserve remains the Nation's only National Scientific Reserve.

The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve is part of the National Park System—considered an "affiliated area" by NPS. It is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and is separate from the Ice Age Trail. It is comprised of nine discrete units.

The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve exhibits in the Northern Kettle Moraine Ice Age Visitor Center were completed by NPS in 1981. NPS also completed similar Ice Age exhibits at two other Reserve unit interpretive centers—Interstate in 1981 and Chippewa Moraine in 1997.

- The three Ice Age education centers are used by school groups on field trips but their popularity has gradually decreased as the exhibits have become more and more outdated and worn out. Additionally, the current exhibits do not tell the story of the first people who arrived during the Ice Age and meet none of today's ADA or section 508 requirements.
- **It is recommended that a one-time amount of \$4 million in federal funds be allocated for the National Park Service to update the interpretive exhibits at the three Ice Age education centers.** The details of this request are in NPS' Project Management Information System (PMIS) as three projects.

Over the past five years, annual expenditures to federal National Scientific Reserve Grant averaged \$1,835,284 per federal year. Total annual expenditures at the Reserve units exceeded \$2,700,000.

A 1970 amendment to the Reserve law allows NPS to "pay up to 50 per centum of the annual costs of management, protection, maintenance, and rehabilitation of the reserve." This type of funding began in 1974, peaked in 2002 at \$806k/year and has been falling ever since. The amount has been just \$739k/year for the past few years, which amounts to a dwindling share of the cost to operate the Reserve. Meanwhile, visitation, per staff costs and inflation have all increased. Therefore, **it is also recommended that the annual funding NPS shares with DNR for the "management, protection, maintenance, and rehabilitation" of the Scientific Reserve is increased to \$999,000 per year.** Similar to the Challenge Cost Share program, the funding comes from the National Park Service's Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) account.

View from Parnell Tower at Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit. Photo Credit: Ice Age Trail Alliance



Introduction

SIGNIFICANCE

Wisconsin is considered by many geologists to be the best place in North America to witness many of the landforms created by continental glaciation. Indeed, the most recent period of the Ice Age, which slowly ended about 10,000 years ago, is known as the Wisconsin Glaciation.

In 1962, the National Park Service proposed a unique partnership effort to conserve and interpret these extraordinary glacial landmarks, the “Ice Age National Scientific Reserve.”

In 1964, the United States Congress enacted legislation that established the National Scientific Reserve as a partnership project of the State of Wisconsin and the National Park Service. It stands today as our nation’s only National Scientific Reserve.

The legislation authorizes the U.S. Department of the Interior to:

...provide up to 50% of the annual cost of management, protection, maintenance, and rehabilitation of the reserve to assure the protection, preservation, and interpretation of the nationally significant values of Wisconsin's continental glaciation.

Prior to the establishment of the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve, geologists had found that some of Wisconsin’s Ice Age features had been damaged or destroyed through human activities.

As development advances to the very boundaries of some Reserve units, continued management and stewardship of these valuable geological resources will ensure that future generations can experience these important natural gems.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

This report uses economic impact data from the 2013 study by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, [*Economic Impacts of the Wisconsin State Park System: Connections to Gateway Communities.*](#)

Mill Bluff State Park Rocky Ridge. Photo Credit: Drew Hanson



Overview

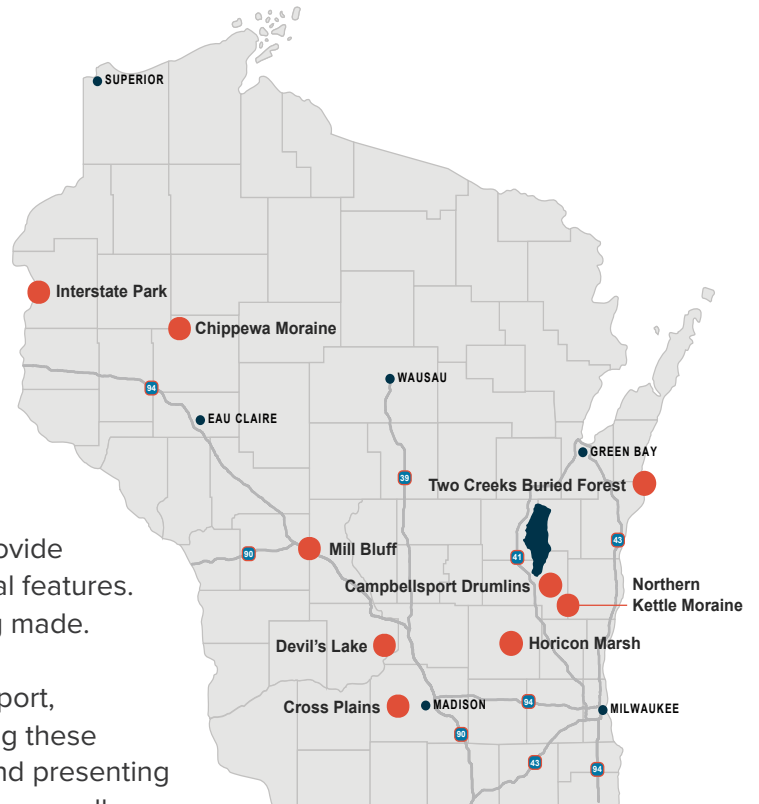
The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve consists of these nine separate units exhibiting outstanding evidence of continental glaciation:

- Interstate Park*
- Chippewa Moraine*
- Mill Bluff State Park*
- Devil's Lake State Park*
- Cross Plains
- Horicon Marsh*
- Two Creeks Buried Forest
- Campbellsport Drumlins
- Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit*

To date, six of the nine units (marked with *) are operational with limited state and federal resources. Interpretive centers at Interstate Park, Chippewa Moraine and the Northern Unit (and a small nature center at Devil's Lake) provide exhibits interpreting each property's unique glacial features. Progress to develop the Cross Plains unit is being made.

At four of the five properties highlighted in this report, DNR staff present programs to visitors, interpreting these glacial features and the surrounding landscape and presenting educational programs to school and youth groups, as well as adult audiences.

And, within all Reserve units except Campbellsport Drumlins, DNR staff, partner organizations and dedicated volunteers work to protect the natural resources of these important areas. Management projects like invasive species control and natural community restoration take place on an ongoing basis.



ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

Linking many of the Reserve units, the 1,200-mile Ice Age Trail traces the edge of the glaciers' advance, about 10,000 years ago. The basic feature defining the route of the Ice Age Trail is the Kettle Moraine of eastern Wisconsin and extending westward along the most recent terminal moraine.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with the NPS and the DNR to manage the Ice Age Trail. While it is heavily involved in on-the-ground trail management, it is much less involved with the National Scientific Reserve.

The Reserve focuses on interpreting nine areas of nationally significant glacial geology for the public while the Trail is one of 11 National Scenic Trails designated by Congress.

Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area

OVERVIEW

- 3,568 acres of state-owned land
- Features ice-walled-lake-plains, debris-filled ridges, hummocks and kettle lakes, scenic views and restored prairie
- Facilities include boat landings, picnic areas and outpost campsites
- 14.5 miles of multi-use trails, including 6.5 miles of accessible trails; includes 8 miles of Ice Age National Scenic Trail

ATTENDANCE

Property (Federal Fiscal Year)	268,966
Ice Age Interpretive Center	11,946
School and Group Attendance	2,763

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2013 economic impact study estimates that visitors provided \$1,233,419 of direct economic impact in the area surrounding Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area.

Hiking at Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area. Photo Credit: WI DNR



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership with our local Chippewa Moraine Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance has been restructured to strengthen communications, define group and property goals, and enhance merchandise sales operations and fiscal accountability.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Developed one-half mile of new trail.

CHALLENGES

Restructuring in October 2023 due to fiscal constraints has resulted in new Interpretive Center operation hours, reorganization of staffing and the continuation of group educational opportunities.

VALUE

“We look forward to our midsummer hikes, listening to the peepers and whip-poor-wills in the evenings while camping and pan fishing with the kids!” Ellie Goldwin – Chippewa Falls, WI

“I love running cross-country on the loop trails here. The four-and-a-half mile loop with the varied terrain is just perfect for me.” Eddie Jefferson – New Auburn, WI



Paddling at Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area.

Photo Credit: WI DNR

Learning at Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area. Photo Credit: WI DNR

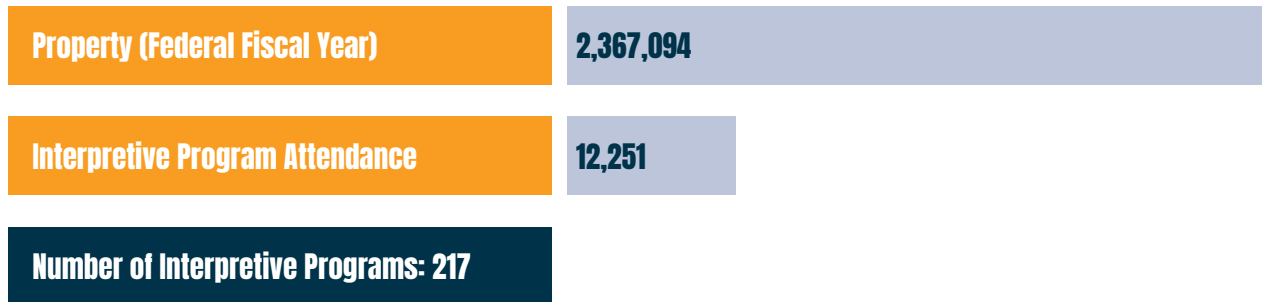


Devil's Lake State Park

OVERVIEW

- 9,738 acres of state-owned land located just south of Baraboo in the Baraboo Hills
- Billion-year-old quartzite bluffs rise 500 feet above lake level
- Home to many unique rock formations including “Devil’s Doorway,” “Balanced Rock” and “Elephant Cave”
- Facilities include four campgrounds, picnic areas, enclosed shelters and boat launches
- 29 miles of hiking trails, including 1.5 miles of accessible trail; includes a segment of Ice Age National Scenic Trail
- Devil’s Lake is the most visited state park in Wisconsin. Visitors come year-round from across the world to take in the unique features and exceptional programs at this park.

ATTENDANCE



Volunteers provided over 2,100 hours helping with interpretive programs and assisting at the nature center.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2013 economic impact study estimates that visitors provided \$120,437,696 of direct economic impact in the area surrounding Devil's Lake State Park.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnered with Girl Scouts of the USA for the Girl Scouts Love State Parks initiative.

Staff works closely with many conservation, recreation, youth, school and tribal groups, including: Little Eagle Arts Foundation (LEAF), Ice Age Trail Alliance, Wisconsin Climbers Association, Devil's Lake Concession Corporation, Ho-Chunk Nation and county and municipal governments.

The Friends of Devil’s Lake State Park continue to actively support the park, including:

- Raising funds towards a \$22 million interpretive center at the park. Public displays and outreach were the focus of this past year.
- Hosting monthly one-day work volunteer events between March and October.
- Securing grant funding to support a wide variety of interpretive programs including those mentioned on Page 9.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Hosted a program by Little Eagle Arts, the Ho-Chunk Dancers and Dells Singers on July 18 that was enjoyed by over 500 participants.
- Hosted voyageur canoe programs on July 28 and 29 that were enjoyed by 200 participants.
- Hosted well-attended programs about effigy mounds and Ho-Chunk adornment and beads.
- Held regular weekly programming offered by the park naturalist.



Devil's Lake State Park Entrance Sign. Photo Credit: WI DNR



Vintage Postcard Murals at Devil's Lake State Park. Photo Credit: WI DNR

CHALLENGES

Operations: While visitation and staffing costs have steadily increased from 2009 to 2022, a decrease in operations funding has caused the park to cut the number of full-time, permanent staff from 15 to 11. During 2022-2023, there was also no part-time seasonal education staff. Insufficient staffing makes it difficult to prepare for the summer season or manage large groups on hikes where participants have differing ability levels.

Space: Most programs must be scheduled outside due to the lack of space inside the Nature Center (a repurposed golf clubhouse). This makes programming dependent on weather conditions and hampers the ability to reasonably accommodate school groups and tours.

VALUE

“You were very engaging. In fact, Brian warned the crew that sometimes speakers are boring, sticking to a spiel without noticing the audience check out, and offered strategies to help you from rambling on. Hindsight proved the warning was a farce. Thanks for being a wealth of knowledge; we learned so much cool information about the geology of Devil’s Lake, the wildlife, and the history of the park.”

“We participated in several programs hosted by Sue at Devil’s Lake while camping there for eight days. The kids loved the learn to fish program. Our whole family truly enjoyed the evening guided kayak tour despite the incoming storm and watching the Perseids meteor shower and getting to see and experience the night sky in a way we have not in the past.”

“I just wanted to thank you for another wonderful field trip! The kids absolutely loved it and talked about it the rest of the school year. You will definitely be hearing from me to schedule a field trip for next school year. Have a wonderful summer!”

Beach Improvements at Devil's Lake State Park. Photo Credit: WI DNR



Interstate Park

OVERVIEW

- 920 of the 1,329 acres of state-owned land at Interstate Park are included in the National Scientific Reserve in St. Croix Falls, Polk County.
- Sheer rock walls rise 200 feet above the St. Croix River; world famous potholes illustrate the drilling effects of sand, gravel and rock that were trapped in whirlpools of glacial melt water.
- Facilities include picnic areas, two campgrounds, a beach and a boat launch.
- More than 14 miles of trails, including the western terminus of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.
- The park's Ice Age Interpretive Center tells the story of the glaciers through exhibits and other interpretive media; the park's naturalist presents seasonal programs for school groups, visitors and other audiences.



Interstate Park Classroom. Photo Credit: WI DNR

ATTENDANCE

Property (Federal Fiscal Year)

225,254

Interpretive Program Attendance

1,316

Number of Interpretive Programs: 70

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2013 economic impact study estimates that visitors provided \$18,481,798 of direct economic impact in the area surrounding Interstate Park.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Friends of Interstate Park filled key roles including:

- Provided funds to add gravel to the first 400 feet of Pothole Trail, reducing mobility barriers and allowing more visitors to see the Dalles of the St. Croix River.
- Replaced decking and reprinted three interpretive signs on the Pothole Trail.
- Installed a 24-hour firewood vending machine, allowing visitors the ability to purchase firewood after the office is closed.
- Installed a new kiosk in front of the Ice Age Center to allow for park information to be distributed after the office is closed.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Painted the exterior of six vault toilets.
- Performed emergency repairs to the park roadway due to a failed culvert.
- Installed six accessible picnic tables throughout the park.



Interstate Park Firewood Vending Machine. Photo Credit: WI DNR

CHALLENGES

- River Bottoms picnic area had the most significant flood event since 2016. Most of the clean-up was completed in a week with a strong team effort from Interstate Park and Governor Knowles recreation staff. Over 1 mile of roadway and over 90 parking stalls were cleared of sand, muck and debris, along with two shelters and three sets of vault toilets. Fortunately, not a single picnic table was lost during the flood.
- Budget constraints are limiting number of staff that can be hired and prioritization of maintenance projects to be completed.
- Aging infrastructure will continue to be an issue in the near future until replacement and improvements can be completed.

Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit

OVERVIEW

- Includes 30,932 acres of land in southeastern Wisconsin, encompassing portions of Sheboygan, Fond du Lac and Washington counties.
- The forest is approximately 50 miles north of Milwaukee. There are more than 4.5 million people living within 100 miles of the property. This is the largest and most varied of the Reserve units.
- The property includes family, group, equestrian, and backpack campsites, picnicking, beaches, boating and fishing.
- It offers more than 130 miles of trails for hiking, biking, horseback riding and cross-country skiing; includes 31 miles of Ice Age National Scenic Trail with 5 backpack camping shelters.

ATTENDANCE

Property (Federal Fiscal Year)

573,253

Note that in 2022, the property shifted to new attendance counters at five locations which are thought to be more accurate than previous counting methods.

Ice Age Visitor Center

12,388

Interpretive Program Attendance

1,500

Number of Interpretive Programs: 91

One limited-term Natural Resources Educator presented 91 personal service interpretive programs with an attendance of approximately 1,500 people.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2013 economic impact study estimates that visitors provided \$29,420,220 of direct economic impact in the area surrounding Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit.

Stables at Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit. Photo Credit: WI DNR



PARTNERSHIPS

15 camp host volunteers provided 1,895 hours of service.

The state forest received \$4,000 in gifts and donations.

There are over 35 official partnerships which aid the state forest in providing various recreation opportunities. Some of these partnerships include:

- Friends of the Kettle Moraine, Inc. (official Friends Group of the state forest):
 - » In the process of entering a formal Concessionaire Agreement to continue providing merchandise sales via a gift shop at the Ice Age Center.
 - » Continued support towards the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Projects – Accessible Kayak Launch and Tamarack Trail Reconstruction
 - » Ongoing mapping effort by the Invasive Species Committee
 - » New initiative toward bird conservation
- Northern Kettles Horse Trail Association:
 - » Provided funds towards a trail extension, providing another looped riding opportunity.
 - » Donation of \$14,500 to replace current corrals with premium corrals with walkthrough gates.
- Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club:
 - » Continuance of a Recreational Land Use Agreement for trail maintenance and grooming efforts of the Greenbush Ski Trails, including providing premier classic and cross-country skiing opportunity and support of a youth ski team.
- Sheboygan County Cycling:
 - » Entered a Recreational Land Use Agreement to begin providing trail maintenance and grooming efforts on the Greenbush Mountain Bike Trails, including to provide winter biking opportunities.
- Ice Age Trail Alliance, Lakeshore Chapter and Washington-Ozaukee Chapter:
 - » Continued support in maintaining the 31-miles of the iconic Ice Age Trail through the state forest.

Partnered with Girl Scouts of the USA for the Girl Scouts Love State Parks initiative.

Mauthe Lake at Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit. Photo Credit: WI DNR





Zillmer Shelter at Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit. Photo Credit: WI

ACHIEVEMENTS

- One limited-term Natural Resources Educator presented 91 personal service interpretive programs with an attendance of approximately 1,500 in 2023.
- Non-personal services included the dissemination of 1,027 booklets and 89 patches of the Wisconsin Explorer Program, 8 Wisconsin Explorer Packs, 12 Take Smokey Camping, 7 Read and Explore books.
- National Natural Landmarks Program recognized Spruce Lake Bog for its 50 years of designation as a National Natural Landmark.
- An eagle scout constructed a new kiosk for the Forest Headquarters.
- A portion of the Tamarack Trail was reconstructed to improve drainage. Funding was provided by the Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant, a private donor and the DNR.
- An abutment was poured in preparation for the installation of a universally accessible kayak launch at Mauthe Lake.
- New Prospect Horseriders Camp entrance road redeveloped.

CHALLENGES

- The Ice Age Visitor Center was constructed in 1980 with minimal investment since construction. The facility needs over \$1 million of exterior improvements, including replacing the roof, gutters, windows, doors and siding. The facility's interior needs over \$1 million in renovations, including new flooring, lighting, interpretive exhibits and restroom facilities. The landscaping of the facility campus also needs extensive restorations to maintain the scenic viewpoints significant to the site.
- After 30 years, educator Jackie Scharfenberg retired in January 2023. The position is vacant.
- Due to staffing shortages and budget limitations, the facility's operation hours were reduced from five days per week (January - October) to three days per week (October - December).
- The state forest sustained the following full-time employee vacancies: parks and recreation specialist, January 2022 to September 2023; natural resources educator, January to present; park ranger, February to present and park manager, July to present.
- Limited Term Employee recruitment and retention is challenging due to budget limitations.

VALUE

Marquette University study on the influence of urbanization on bird species flocking dynamics.

Pennsylvania State University research collection for rangewide analysis of threatened Ash species.

United States Geological Survey research on testing a rapid assessment approach for estimating occupancy of the endangered rusty patched bumble bee at two spatial scales.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee research collection of soil and insect samples to investigate the microbiome grown under different climates in the U.S.

Mill Bluff State Park

OVERVIEW

- 1,598 acres of state-owned land features tall buttes and glacial lake bed in Camp Douglas.
- The park has a 200-step overlook that offers a spectacular view of the extinct glacial lake bed below.
- Has picnic areas, about 2 miles of hiking trails, 21 campsites and a beach along a 2-acre spring-fed pond, plus picturesque rock formations.

ATTENDANCE

Property (Federal Fiscal Year)

36,616

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The 2013 economic impact study estimates that visitors provided \$4,934,856 of direct economic impact in the area surrounding Mill Bluff State Park.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Friends of Wildcat Mountain State Park continue to operate firewood sales.

Mill Bluff State Park Sign. Photo Credit: WI DNR



ACHIEVEMENTS

Completed a 17-acre afforestation project led by DNR forestry which included planting 13,500 hardwood seedlings. There were two main goals for this project:

1. Convert cool season grass to hardwood forest of white oak, swamp white oak, red oak, bur oak and black cherry;
2. Current and future master plans on the property call for restoration of natural forest communities at Mill Bluff State Park. The goal will be afforestation of this field to provide new quality forest habitat.

In early fall 2023, park staff led a local school group on a field trip in the park to explore the unique geology as well as highlight the past use of the area of the park by Native American tribes, as evidenced by the petroglyphs and rock art in the park.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge continues to be limited funding, which limits staffing.

VALUE

Mill Bluff's proximity to the interstate highway makes it a stopover for travelers, who hike to the top of the bluff and utilize property amenities.

Mill Bluff Needle Rock. Photo Credit: Drew Hanson



Cross Plains State Park

OVERVIEW

- 900 acres of publicly-owned land that includes the National Park Service headquarters for the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. It is also minutes from the Ice Age Trail Alliance national headquarters
- The best example of the interface between glaciated and unglaciated terrain in the National Scientific Reserve, where glaciated morainal ridges meet the eroded Driftless Area
- Land in the park is owned by the DNR, NPS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Dane County and private landowners
- The park is not fully operational as there are limited developed recreational facilities except hiking trails and two parking areas on county land and two on USFWS land
- Recreational uses include: hiking, wildlife viewing, picnicking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, geocaching and hunting in some designated areas



Boardwalk Construction at Cross Plains State Park. Photo Credit: Dave Caliebe

ATTENDANCE

New trail counters are being tested and calibrated.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Economic impact data has not been collected for Cross Plains State Park.

PARTNERSHIPS

Ice Age Trail Alliance, Dane County Chapter volunteers devoted 1,666 hours of their free time to the first stages of new trail construction, ecological restoration and other land stewardship. These volunteer efforts occurred during 22 organized group work days plus various smaller projects.

Began working with partners to explore renaming the property to something more fitting of the resource and that could be used by all partners for their lands.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- A great deal of work by staff and volunteers was completed to prepare for construction of 3 miles of new trail.
- A trail mapping project promises to soon provide adequate You-Are-Here maps at key trail intersections and online.
- Prescribed burns of native habitat were completed by the DNR on state land and by the NPS on federal land.

CHALLENGES

- Without funding allotted to the DNR lands within Cross Plains State Park, staff from neighboring properties must provide oversight, maintenance and visitor protection services.
- As development continues in the Madison metropolitan area, the landscape and scenic views surrounding Cross Plains State Park are threatened; rising land prices also makes purchase of private lands within the project boundary difficult.
- The public continues to use the property without adequate parking.

VALUE

*“This trail is fantastic! I had no idea there was such beautiful hiking trails at Cross Plains State Park!”
- Melissa Droessler*

“This place rocks. Pun intended.” - Evelyn Ringdroski, Age 13

Volunteers at Cross Plains State Park. Photo Credit: Amy Lord



Current Expenses

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The federal National Scientific Reserve Grant funds permanent staff, seasonal staff and supplies on the management, maintenance, interpretation, visitor services, resource protection and public access to recreational and educational opportunities for all visitors at the following Reserve units:

- Interstate Park
- Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area
- Devil's Lake State Park
- Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit

WISCONSIN STATE PARK SYSTEM

Over the past five years, annual expenditures to federal National Scientific Reserve Grant averaged \$1,835,284 per federal year. Total annual expenditures at the Reserve units exceeded \$2,700,000.

NPS FUNDING SHORTFALL

Half of the average annual expenditures to the federal National Scientific Reserve Grant totals \$917,600. This amount was \$179,000 short of the 50% needed from the National Park Service to operate these properties. The costs associated with operating the properties has increased dramatically due to increased visitation, inflation and aging facility infrastructure.

Trailbuilding at Cross Plains State Park. Photo Credit: Dave Caliebe



Statement Of Need

Wisconsin continues to experience record attendance across the state park system. As the state continues to fund operations without state tax dollars, the National Scientific Reserve units are in need of increased federal funding to return programming to previous levels and even just maintain current, basic operations.

Across the National Scientific Reserve units, properties face several similar issues:

Staffing: A lack of funding prohibits adequate year-round staffing of the interpretive centers, resulting in limited hours, programs that are too large to manage, seasonal shutdowns and reliance on increasing numbers of seasonal staff. For example, in 2001, Wisconsin state parks had 19 full-time educators who provided 5,238 programs. In 2022, this dropped to five full-time, permanent educators and 2,414 programs.

Exhibits: The interpretive centers' exhibits require replacement. Parts of exhibits are broken and outdated, and technology has not kept pace.

Facilities: The interpretive centers are lacking universal accessibility, carpeting needs to be replaced, windows are energy inefficient, and the spaces are undersized to accommodate program participation, visitors, and special events.

Recommendations

The annual grant must be increased to help cover the costs associated with operating the Reserve units. The DNR recommends continuing to share the cost burden with the NPS to operate and maintain the interpretive centers.

Increasing the annual NPS grant to \$999,000 would bring the NPS closer to a 50% cost share and would allow the DNR to:

- Provide additional, needed staffing at Devil's Lake State Park, Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit, Interstate Park, Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area and Mill Bluff State Park for operations work and interpretation services;
- Include additional interpretive staff at one or more Reserve units;
- Provide new dedicated staffing for Cross Plains State Park to open the park more fully to the public and address rapidly growing public use that is stressing resources; and
- Allow staff at these properties to better engage the public.

One-time separate funding of \$4 million is needed for the NPS to replace interpretive exhibits at the three Ice Age education centers (see page 22).

Through partnerships, grants, donations and other fundraising efforts, the DNR commits to seeking funding to address other needed facility updates at the Reserve units.

Together, the state and the federal government can return the Reserve to brilliance, provide excellent customer service and build resiliency in our ability to adapt as we administer these critically important places of natural history, recreation, culture, economic benefit and understanding, but only with sufficient funding.

The existing interpretive exhibits in the Interstate Park Ice Age Interpretive Center and Kettle Moraine State Forest - Northern Unit Ice Age Visitor Center were created in 1981. At Chippewa Moraine, they were created in 1997. The exhibits are outdated, worn out, and do not meet accessibility standards. The exhibits no longer meet visitor expectations of professional standards or take advantage of any modern technology available to connect the nationally significant resources with visitors. Replacing these exhibits will directly improve the visitor experience, increase tourism, and revitalize these national treasures.

INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS AT INTERSTATE PARK

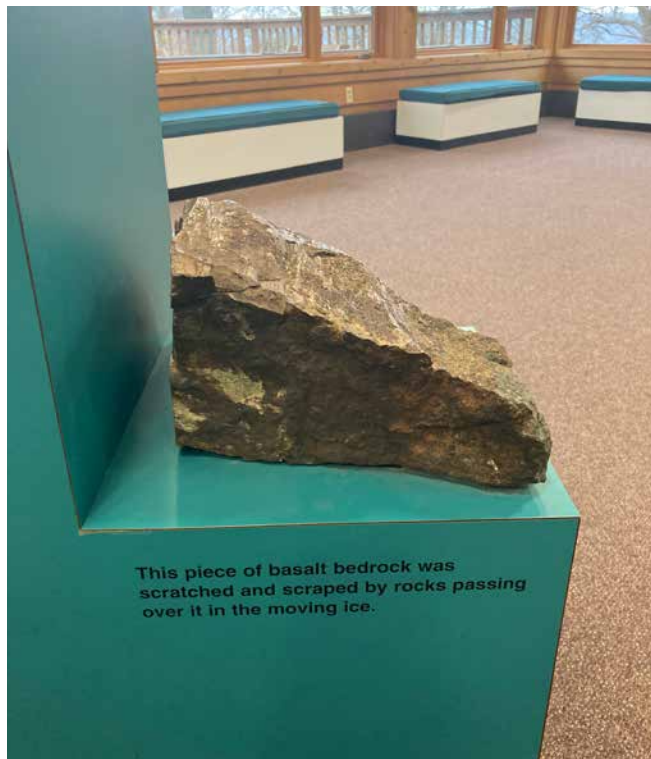


Photo Credit: WI DNR

