WILLIAM W. POWERS STATE RECREATION AREA

Park Enhancement Recommendations

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
August 2016

WILLIAM W. POWERS STATE RECREATION AREA PARK ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

August 2016

The Lakota Group
Bartlett Tree Experts

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was developed with the input and advice from dozens of smart, thoughtful, and committed people. A special thanks to all those who contributed.

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WITH:
BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS

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Assures Improvements at Wolf Lake

The improvement of Wolf Lake state park was assured by William T. Lodge, seated, director of the Illinois Department of Conservation. Area elected officials met with Lodge last week to discuss the future of the lake. Officials, standing from left, are Sen. Daniel Dougherty (13th), Sen. Robert F. Maher (17th), Rep. August Ruf (24th), Rep. Henry Lenard (24th), Sam Parr, assistant conservation director, and Rep. Nick Svalina 24th).

Site dedication 1946

Save Woods, Wildlife, and Water: Club

BY HAL BARGER

A club of 375 men and women is trying to halt the march of industry and civilization in Wolf lake state park.

Members of the Southeast Sportsmen's club, they are striving to prevent pollution of the lake and to keep intact the remaining wildlife area in south Cook county.

"Stop the Enemy"

"You might call us a wildlife militia," John T. Kelly, 9937 Kingston av., group secretary, said. "We guard water, woods, and wildlife. We feel if we don't save every bit we now have we will eventually lose it all."

Kelly is a police captain in the chief of detective's bureau. Other club members include professional men, business men, housewives, factory workers and teen-agers.

Anglers Say Bass Biting in Wolf Lake

BY RAY GRAY

Fishing has perked up again, especially at nearby Wolf lake on the south side of town where some nice black bass have been taken, according to reports.

Chicagoans, angling Monday in the Illinois portion of the lake near the railroad tracks, reported getting several 4 and 5 pounders, plus a number of fish weighing more than three pounds.

The lucky fishermen used nightcrawlers for bait.

Northern pike are reported on a feeding binge on the Mississippi river, near Genoa, Wis., another "hot spot" on the mighty waters.

Esther Traum, who operates Fin and Feather resort on Spring lake on the Mississippi river near Thomson, Ill., writes that bullheads started to bite first, and now the crappies are hitting. She reported that numerous strings were brought in over the week-end with many of the crappie measuring 12 to 14 inches.

Anglers who visited Bullfrog lake in the Cook County forest preserves, made good catches of nice size bluegills. Some bass also were caught, but they only measured about nine inches.

Jim Houser, of Big Bear Camp on Kentucky Lake, near Benton, phoned to report that fishing is improving, and the water is good and warming. Some black bass have been caught, also crappie.

If the warm weather continues, the crappie run could be on any day now.

Word from Bruce Sloan, who runs Grider Hill dock and Indian Creek Lodge on Lake Cumberland near Albany, Ky., is that bass fishing continues to be good.

Most bass were taken jigging nightcrawlers early in the evening and at night. Crappie fishing continues excellent.

Chicago AMERICAN

May 4th, 19

CHICAGO DAILY CALUMET Page 8 Wed., July 11, 1962

LEVER BROS. CITED

Review Findings On Lake Pollution

A detailed report charging Lever Brothers with the pollution of Wolf Lake is ... dian Stream Pollution ...

Historic newspaper articles document long-standing community interest in recreation and conservation at the William W. Powers State Recreation Area

INTRODUCTION

In March of 1946, the State of Illinois acquired the 160-acre parcel which was at that time known as the Wolf Lake Conservation Area. The site, located in the Hegewisch neighborhood of the City of Chicago, quickly became a popular place for local people to enjoy outdoor activities like fishing and hunting as well as a focus of neighborhood groups who promoted conservation and stewardship of the site's natural resources. In 1965, the Illinois General Assembly dedicated the site to William W. Powers, a local Chicago alderman and Illinois General Assembly legislator, who used the site for picnics to feed the needy during the Great Depression.

Today, the site is know as the William W. Powers State Recreation Area (Wm. W. Powers SRA), and it remains a popular site owned and managed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The 614-acre park includes 195 acres of land and 419 acres of Wolf Lake with nearly six miles of shoreline frontage. IDNR estimates that the park hosts about a half-million visitors annually.

Wm. W. Powers SRA is a unique site. It is the only state park in the City of Chicago, which makes it unusual both among other state parks and among other regional open spaces. It also shares a body of water and a border with the City of Hammond, Indiana. It's a special place that is distinctive from neighboring public open spaces because of the combination of its ecological and cultural significance, its shared border with Indiana, its unique recreation offerings, and its close connection to a number of regional trails.

The site also offers unique vistas of the region—from its shoreline you can observe active industry, rare plant and animal species, and people enjoying an afternoon paddling or fishing on Wolf Lake. It is a place where visitors are introduced to the greater Calumet region's landscape of contrast.

Wm. W. Powers SRA has a lot of potential as both an integral part of a destination network of Wolf Lake parks and to complement the many other innovative open space developments occurring in the Calumet area and broader Chicago region. To help understand how to better realize this potential, IDNR contracted our consultant team to engage the community in a planning process for the site. This process yielded the park enhancement recommendations described in this report.

Our team spent the first half of 2016 executing the planning process. We worked with IDNR to engage the community by hosting a dialogue with local residents, park users, partner agencies and organizations, and leadership from surrounding communities. We also spent time observing the site, evaluating its condition, and understanding park operations. Through this work, we came to understand a number of things about the site, including:

- Site challenges and opportunities;
- Priorities for site improvements—including which improvements are most important to the community and which are most important to IDNR; and,
- The realities of implementation—including insight into which improvements may be implemented in the near term, which improvements will be contingent on cooperation with a partner, and which improvements are important to fulfilling the long term vision for the future of the site.

Through this balanced approach to forming recommendations we seek to provide IDNR with an honest, clear, and community-supported strategy that will lay the groundwork—even in the current climate of limited resources—for near-term and long-term improvements at the Wm. W. Powers SRA site.

The thoughts and recommendations of this report reflect our evaluation of a number of different sources of information. Throughout the process we heard a great amount of thoughtful and significant input from community members. We also evaluated the condition of site amenities and infrastructure, and talked to staff about park operations and budget realities.

Wm. W. Powers SRA Visitor Center

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following reflects a comprehensive evaluation of the Wm. W. Powers SRA site at present based on conversations with park stakeholders, site observations, and the review of existing plans and reports. This assessment includes an overview of existing conditions, as well as a description of some key site challenges and opportunities reported by participants and observed by our team.

Park Context and Identity

As a state park, the Wm. W. Powers SRA site has the unusual advantage of being located within the City of Chicago's 10th Ward. The communities of the 10th Ward are active, diverse, and densely populated, and historically many local people have used the site regularly for recreation and relaxation. Because of this, there is a strong sense of appreciation and shared stewardship of the site by the local community—some of who may not otherwise be able or predisposed to visit such a place.

In recent years, the ethnicity of the 10th Ward has changed, becoming more African American and Hispanic. This shift has caused some anxiety for both long-time and newer 10th Ward residents, and this reality is sometimes evidenced in interactions at the park. Even so, today's local community continues to engage regularly with the site and is interested and enthusiastic about promoting positive change.

Community members appreciate the park as a hidden gem and many locals use the park to walk or jog, hunt or fish, as a quiet respite, or as a place to spend time with their family. The park is filled with picnickers in the summer months, and is occasionally used as a community event space hosting farmers markets, fun runs, and other gatherings. In some

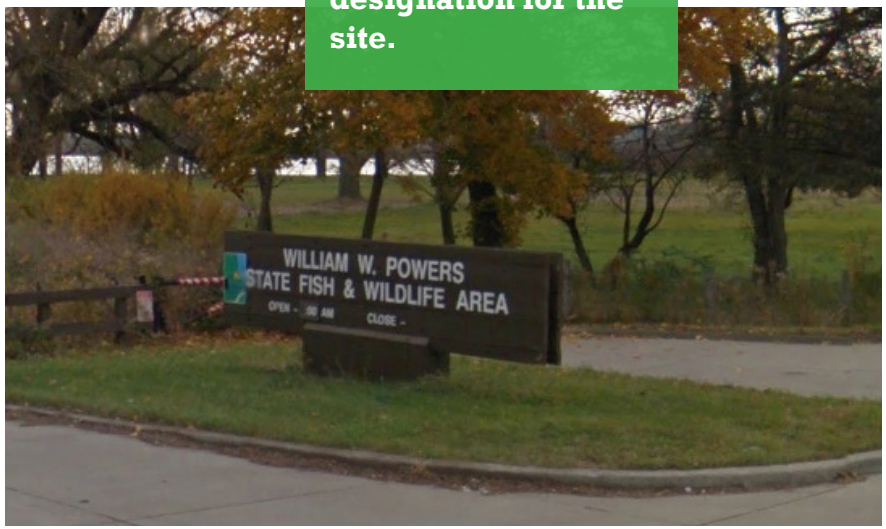
cases, neighborhood residents have enjoyed the site with their families and friends for generations.

Although the site is a valued community asset, many local people don't recognize the area as Wm. W. Powers SRA or know that it's owned and managed by IDNR. Most people just know they love the site and that they don't want to see it drastically changed.

With many regional audiences Wm. W. Powers SRA also suffers from a lack of recognition. Many residents that we spoke to from neighboring communities, like residents of the south suburbs and even the nearby 9th Ward, aren't aware of the site.

Recognition of the site is much better among regional land managers and leadership associated with Millennium Reserve. In fact, this audience enthusiastically supports Wm. W. Powers SRA as an important regional open space, believing that the site provides an opportunity to engage and captivate a bi-state population through an increased investment in programs and amenities.

Despite challenges of recognition, Wm. W. Powers SRA is still a very well-used park. It is visited by nearly a half-million people a year. In terms of visitors per acre, Wm. W. Powers SRA ranks 15th among all IDNR sites where attendance figures are tracked (114 sites total), with 772 visitors per acre in 2014 and an even more impressive 2,432 visitors per *land* acre in 2014.



Entry Signs at Wm. W. Powers SRA still read "State Fish and Wildlife Area," an outdated IDNR designation for the site.

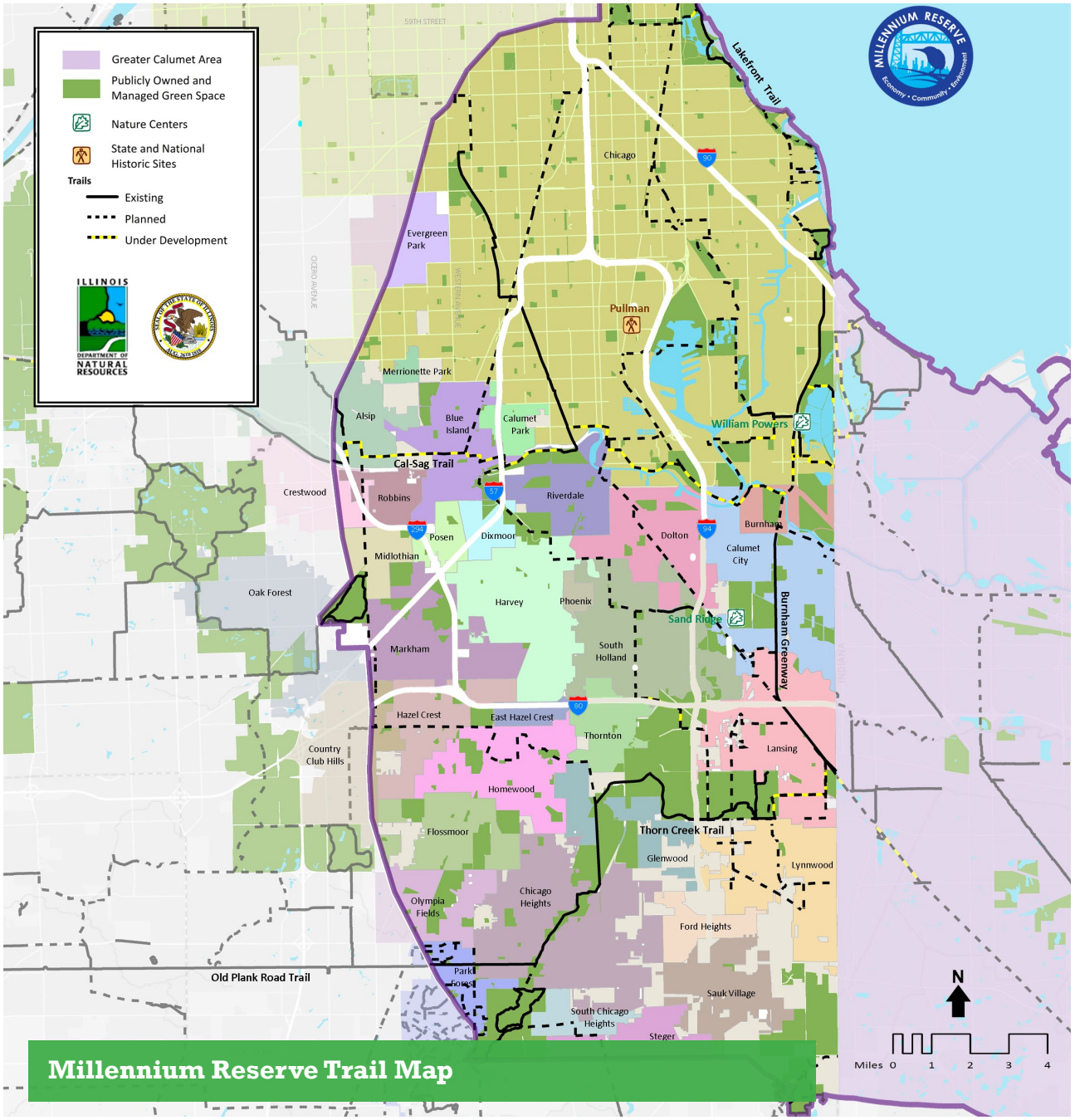
Park Access and Connectivity

Currently, access to the site for all modes of transportation is difficult which is something that may contribute to the site's lack of recognition by regional visitors.

The site has no wayfinding for visitors traveling by car and is located in a part of the city that is difficult to navigate for those unfamiliar with the area. Many potential visitors become easily confused and frustrated once they leave the comfort of the interstate and Chicago's grid system, and that frustration can easily turn to fear given that the surrounding area has a reputation of being unsafe. Once a visitor arrives, the site itself does not appear welcoming or inviting due to its appearance and limited operating hours. It is also reported by stakeholders that parking can be difficult to find during peak picnicking season.

The site is also hard to access via public transit. The #30 CTA bus serves Wm. W. Powers SRA. But, many stakeholders expressed that this bus route is not convenient for local visitors, and as a result many do not use the bus line.

One strong asset of the site in terms of access and connectivity is its position at a nexus of a number of regional bicycle trails. At Wm. W. Powers SRA, one can connect to the Burnham Greenway that provides access to many outdoor activities and spaces within the community, and even links into the American Discovery trail (that runs across the country from California to Connecticut). A cyclist can also connect into northwest Indiana's network of trails. Conversely, cyclists coming to the city from Indiana can take a rest and enjoy Chicago's only state park. However, some trail gaps (such as the Burnham Trail gap, south of Burley Ave to 126th Street) remain, the site suffers from a lack of wayfinding signage for bikes and pedestrians. These deficiencies make it very difficult for visitors to understand and access amenities beyond the park's boundaries, and also inhibit the community from easily accessing the site on foot and by bicycle. IDNR-supported plans to address some of these challenges, like trail gaps, exist. The map on the next page provides an overview of existing trails as well as trails that are planned and under-development.



Millennium Reserve Trail Map

Park Land Use and Facility Conditions

The geography of the Wm. W. Powers SRA site is comprised of four major land-character areas that accommodate a diverse range of activities and uses: the Day Use Area, North Woods, South Woods, and Wolf Lake / Indian Creek.

Day Use Area

The Day Use Area is home to most of the park's consumptive recreation uses. These uses occur on a relatively small footprint of land area, in fact, of the 195 land acres available at the park approximately 150 acres are reserved as undeveloped natural area. South of the main entry drive, the existing main picnic area parallels Avenue O – a busy arterial street. Fixed tables and grills are located in shady spots beneath willow and cottonwood trees. Two picnic shelters (Shelter 2 and Shelter 3) are located in this area. Shelter 2 is located west of the park road along Avenue O, next to the park's main toilet building. Shelter 3 is located across the park road from Shelter 2, and is served by its own pit toilet building.

The Visitor Center / Site Office is located south of the main picnic area adjacent to Indian Creek. The Visitor Center is an asset to the park, and currently serves as the only other center of this type in the area (the nearest comparable facility is the Forest Preserves of Cook County's Sand Ridge Nature Center, located six miles south). The building was constructed in 2013 at a cost of $1.2 million. The structure, designed by Hanno Weber & Associates, houses space for special events, education programs, and offices. The structure's modern aesthetic—which is not everyone's cup of tea—pays tribute to the area's industrial heritage. The interior of the building hosts a large interpretive display comprised of many large, colorful, illustrated panels that describe the ecology of the site and the greater Calumet region.

Adjacent to the Visitor Center is a small courtyard intended for outdoor education space and gatherings. The courtyard is currently surfaced with recycled slag granular fill that is less than hospitable for many types of potential uses, and as a result the courtyard is not used to its full potential. Despite this, community events are occasionally staged in this area and in the parking lots located close to the Visitor Center.

A small boat harbor and a granite memorial obelisk placed in 1946 commemorating the parks dedication are also located near the Visitor Center. Another picnic area is located just south of the boat harbor. This picnic area, located on a small piece of land that extends into Wolf Lake, is an area of the park that has been hit particularly hard by beaver activity, resulting in a loss of many mature trees. At the very south end of the Day Use Area is a fenced maintenance compound, the superintendent's residence, and the site's southern access point which bisects 130th street.

Two boat launch facilities accessing Pool 1 and Pool 2 are located at the north end of the Day Use Area, north of the main entry drive. A small playground, wooden benches, and a small information kiosk are located near the boat launch. Two group picnic shelters and two pit toilet buildings are located in this area as well (Shelter

1 and Shelter 4). This area used to serve as the "front door" of the site, and physical remnants of the old entry point (including pavement and a very large entry sign) still exist today. However, access to Avenue O is restricted to vehicular traffic by a gate.

A decommissioned and memorialized Nike Ajax missile commemorating those stationed at Wolf Lake during the Cold War is also located in the north Day Use Area. A number of granite memorial plaques honoring veteran's organizations (dedicated with the park in 1947) may be found in this area as well. The plaques are flush mounted into the ground, aligning the old entry drive. The memorial plaques have not been well-maintained, and many of the plaques have been buried over the years.

In general, Day Use Area facilities at Wm. W. Powers SRA are aging and don't support the needs of existing users. Some facilities that would be well-used by visitors – like walking trails—don't exist. Others – like the Visitor Center and restroom buildings – have limited hours of operation due to vandalism and security concerns. Physical accessibility of facilities at the park is also an issue, and serving the needs of people with mobility challenges and seniors should be considered as part of any proposed improvements.

One of the park's picnic shelters, located in the Day Use Area

Fishing in the boat harbor is a popular pastime for park users

Race staging (the 2016 Wolf Lake 5k) in the Day Use Area

Community event staging next to the Visitor Center

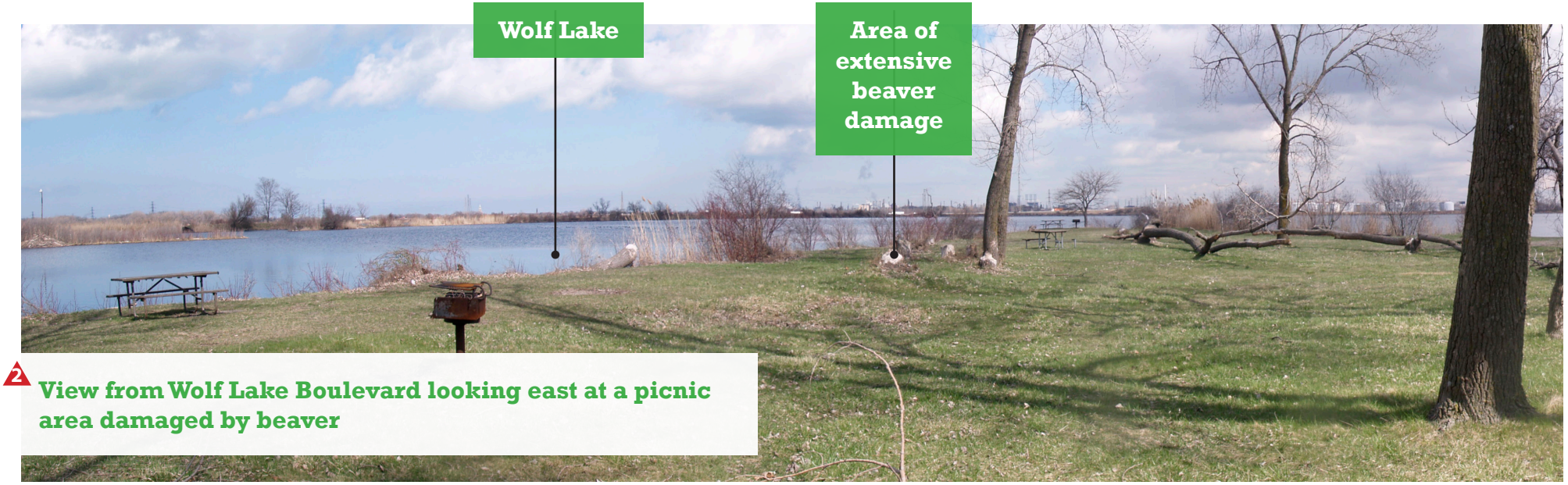
A decommissioned Nike Ajax Missile commemorates service at Wolf Lake

Information kiosk and playground near the northern picnic shelters and boat launch

Memorial plaque honoring a local veteran's organization

Farmers Market staging in the Day Use Area

1 View from Wolf Lake Boulevard looking south towards the Visitor Center



2 View from Wolf Lake Boulevard looking east at a picnic area damaged by beaver

Indian Creek
Park Road
Toilet Building

South Picnic Area
Pool 3

3 View looking east of Pool #1 and Pool #2, boat launches, and one of the Wolf Lake dikes

Pool 1
ATTENTION BOATERS
NO WAKE REGULATIONS
MOTORS EXCEEDING
10 HP
MUST OPERATE AT
"NO WAKE ONLY"

North Woods

The North Woods sub-area is a heavily-wooded area just north of the Day Use Area. This portion of the site is home to a 15-acre wetland which is currently being restored. The woods and wetland provide important habitat, including nesting sites for yellow-headed blackbirds and Virginia rails as well as seasonal refuge for many species of migrating birds. North Woods is closed to the non-hunting public for waterfowl hunting during the fall. Hunting must be done from authorized blinds.

A boat launch to access Pool 4 is located in the North Woods sub-area. The launch is located at the far north end of Pool 4 just east of the railroad tracks.

A north connection to the both the Burnham Greenway and Wolf Lake Overlook (owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County) is accessible from the North Woods.

South Woods

The South Woods sub-area is located at the very south end of the site, adjacent to 133rd Street. During the Cold War the South Woods sub-area was used to house a radar station, as part of Nike missile site C-44. Nike missile sites were located throughout the Chicago region as part of an air defense system for Chicago and its heavy industries. On the south end of Pool 3 and east of the K Channel one can still see some remnants of the operation. South Woods is isolated and disconnected from the rest of the Wm. W. Powers SRA site, and currently little visual indication that the property is owned and managed by IDNR.

South Woods is home to a very ecologically diverse system of shallow pools, marshes, and woodlands. Numerous species of wildlife may be seen in this area including herons, least bitterns, and Virginia rails. Osprey, Franklin's ground squirrel, and Blanding's turtle have also been seen here. The ecological importance of this sub-area is made more significant due to its close proximity to the 136-acre Forest Preserves sites, Powderhorn Marsh and Powderhorn Prairie to the south. Many community members we spoke to suggested that IDNR reconsider purchasing parcels adjacent to South Woods to create a contiguous natural area. IDNR has unsuccessfully attempted to purchase some of this land in the past.

An "unofficial" boat launch is located in South Woods, providing access to Pool 3. There is also an unpaved parking area at this location that is in poor condition.

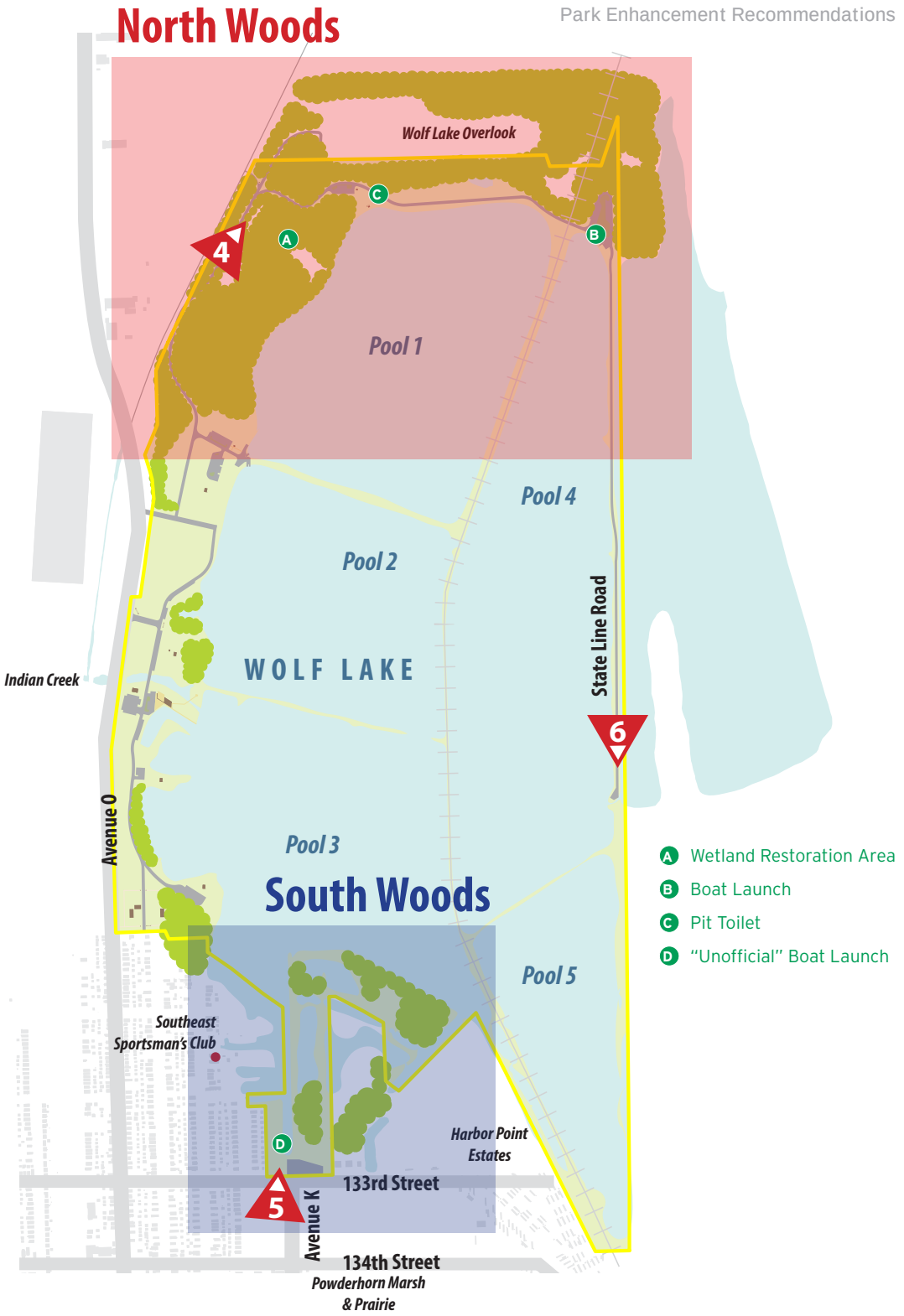
Wolf Lake and Indian Creek

Wolf Lake, on the Illinois side, is divided into five pools, each between 50 acres and 100 acres in size. Wolf Lake is a very special natural element of the park. Historically, Wolf Lake was connected to Lake Michigan by a creek running through Hammond on the Indiana side, but the creek has long since been blocked by development. Today, water enters the Illinois side of Wolf Lake from the Indiana side at the southeast corner of Pool 4. There, it flows under a footbridge at the end of State Line Dike and then under the Indiana Harbor Belt railroad bridge into Pool 2. Water leaves the lake as it flows over a small concrete dam and into Indian Creek from Pool 3. Eventually, Indian Creek feeds into the Calumet River. Indian Creek is currently the sole outlet of water from Wolf Lake to the Calumet River.

The dikes that divide the pools of Wolf Lake were built to support dredging equipment in the 1950s during the construction of the Skyway, when dredge from the lake was used for fill material to construct the new road. State Line Dike – the eastern boundary of the park—provides excellent shoreline fishing and is popular with bicyclists. In recent years the shorelines of the dikes, lake, and State Line Road have eroded and become overgrown. Many areas of shoreline would benefit from restoration efforts – which would also improve conditions for shore fishing, a popular activity at the park.

The dikes serve as a place for shore fishing and seasonal waterfowl hunting. They also provide a valuable opportunity for site visitors without boats to get out into the middle of the lake and enjoy views of the surrounding natural environment and neighboring industry.

State Line Road allows visitors to drive their car or ride their bike into the middle of the lake. This is a great park experience – and allows visitors to experience a place most often only viewed in passing while traveling at high speeds on the adjacent toll road.



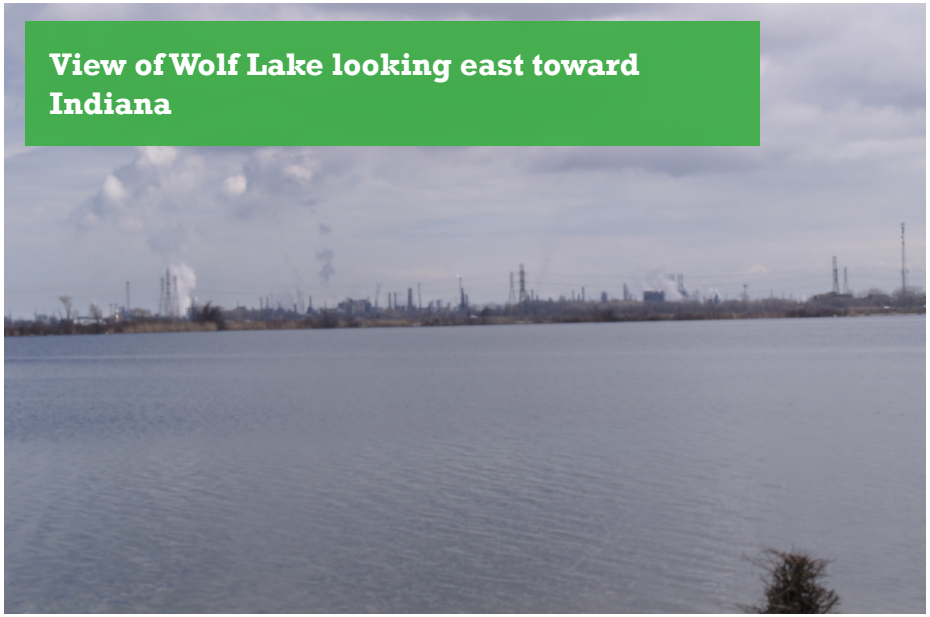
Forest Preserves of Cook County signage identifying the Wolf Lake Overlook Site, just north of the North Woods sub-area

"Unofficial" boat launch at Avenue K in the South Woods sub-area

View of the North Woods shoreline looking south toward the Visitor Center

View south from South Woods towards Powderhorn Prairie across privately-owned land

State Line Road with a view east of Indiana industry



View of Wolf Lake looking east toward Indiana

Duck blind along State Line Road

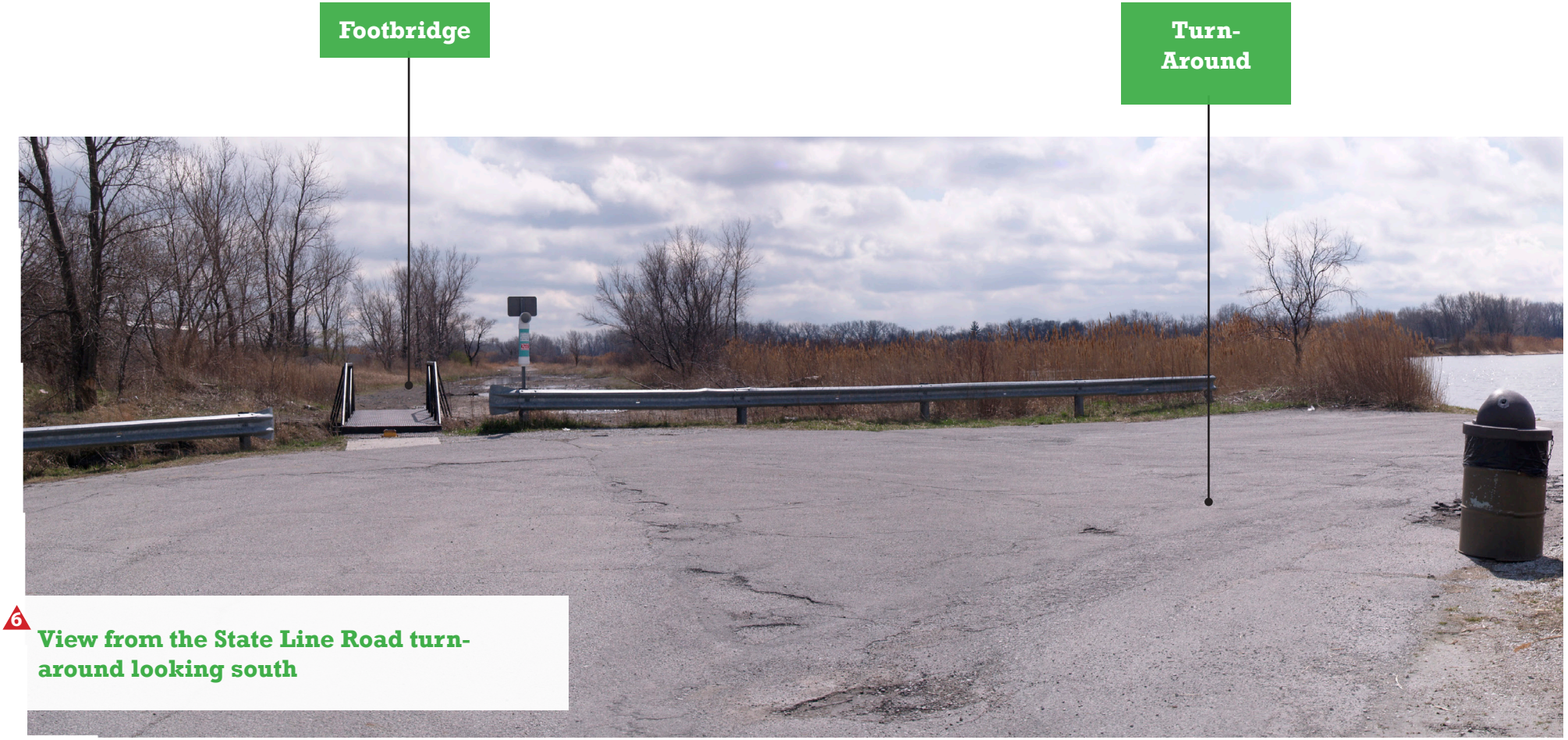
View of Indian Creek looking east toward Wolf Lake and Indiana

4 View of the Burnham Greenway trailhead looking north toward Wolf Lake Overlook

5 View from the South Woods parking lot looking northwest across the Avenue K Channel

2016
Restoration
Site

Site Rules
Sign



6 **View from the State Line Road turn-around looking south**

Pool 4
Invasive Phragmites & Degraded Shoreline

Park Ecology and Habitat

Wm. W. Powers SRA is one of the most important biological sites in the Chicago region. In fact, Wolf Lake is designated as an *Illinois Natural Area Inventory site* based on its rare species and habitats, including birds and plants that are diminishing in number, and in some cases mostly gone. The ecological significance of the site is accentuated by its neighbors. Eggers Grove, a Forest Preserves of Cook County site just north of Wm. W. Powers SRA, is home to some of Chicago's best remaining wetlands. Powderhorn Marsh and Prairie, a Forest Preserves of Cook County site just south of Wm. W. Powers SRA, is an excellent example of dune and swale topography in what was once glacial Lake Chicago. Together, these three sites create a block of almost-contiguous green space providing a benefit to a region where most open space exists in a degraded condition.

Habitat

Although Wm. W. Powers SRA contains pockets of rich habitat for various plant and animal species, the site is also faced with some environmental and ecological challenges. Invasives have been a major threat at Wm. W. Powers SRA both in the uplands and wetlands. Phragmites infestation of the lake shore, a particularly challenging issue, is centered on a 15-acre area located at the northwestern section of the site, originally hardwood swamp and emergent wetland, which was badly altered in an old road construction project. The hydrological change coupled with beaver activity resulted in excessive deadfall and snags, causing additional water flow changes to the site. A restoration project is currently underway to restore the 15-acre wetland area. Species being treated in this area include purple loosestrife, garlic mustard, marsh plume thistle, crown vetch, autumn olive, buckthorn, honeysuckle, common reed, possibly Eurasian water milfoil, white mulberry, and tree of heaven.

Indian Creek, the lake's outflow channel, is highly polluted in sections beyond park property, just west of Avenue O. The creek also suffers from large deposits of sediment and a fish barrier as it enters the Calumet River. The many earthen dikes further impact the free flow of aquatic life.

Site Animal Species

Despite some challenges with degraded habitat, the site is home to an array of different species. Fish species inhabiting Wolf Lake include largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, redear sunfish, crappie, bullhead, carp, walleye, hybrid muskie, and yellow perch. There is even an occasional salmon caught in the lake. (Salmon can access the lake via the Calumet River and its Indian Creek tributary.) Lake sturgeon, endangered in both Indiana and Illinois, as well as banded killifish, threatened in Illinois, are also part of the Wolf Lake ecology.

Native birds hosted by the park include cardinals, blue jays, finches, orioles, woodpeckers, teal, mallards, resident and migratory Canada geese, and an occasional bald eagle. The lake supports the nesting habitat for four species of endangered birds: little blue heron, yellow-crowned night heron, black-crowned night heron, and yellow-headed

blackbird. Native trumpeter and tundra swans and non-native mute swans may all be found on the lake in winter. Tundra swans are absent in summer as they migrate to the arctic and subarctic to nest. The non-native, Eurasian mute swans compete for habitat with the non-migrating trumpeter swan population and is an impediment to restoration of the native trumpeters around the Great Lakes.

Birdwatchers enjoy the non-native monk parakeet, a South American parrot, which nests in the park. The South American monk parakeets arrived at the site in 1999 and have since established two nests with seven or eight birds each. They are presumed to have migrated from the Hyde Park community area.

The park also attracts city dwelling mammals such as squirrels, rabbits, raccoon, muskrats, opossums, and the occasional coyote and white-tailed deer. There is a large population of beaver on the lake currently that negatively impacts tree health at the site. The park's annual trapping program seeks to limit their numbers, but is not currently managing the problem effectively.

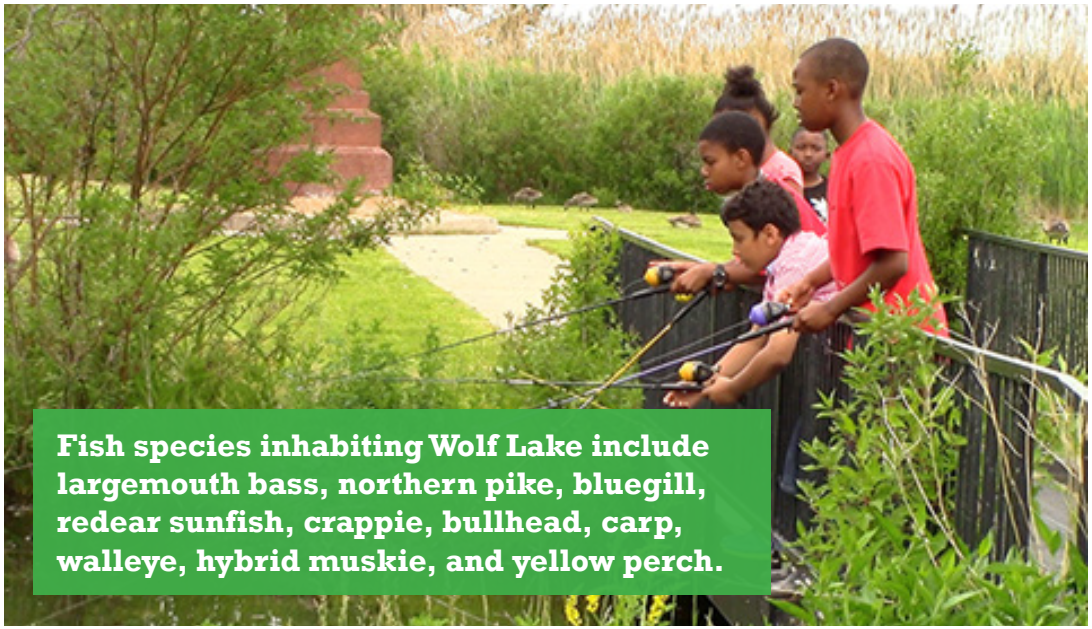
Tree Health

Tree health is another issue faced by the site. A tree inventory and management plan was undertaken and completed by Bartlett Tree Experts (Bartlett) in January of 2016. The inventory was concentrated within three primary zones with an emphasis on the Day Use Area. A total of 176 trees were inventoried and analyzed for tree structure, health, vigor, presence, extent of beaver damage, and life expectancy. The inventory identified 18 different species, the predominate species identified were poplar (31%), ash (21%), willow (12%), maple (9%), and red cedar (9%).

Today, the majority of the trees inventoried are in fair or good condition. However, because of the age of the tree stock, Bartlett determined that over half of the existing trees are expected to die in the next decade. The large majority of trees inventoried were mature or over mature and only 1% of trees were considered young.

Therefore, of the entire inventoried tree stock, 35% trees were recommended for immediate removal (18% of the total tree stock was identified as posing a hazardous situation to the public and an additional 17% of the total inventory was recommended for removal due to age, dead branches, cavity-stem and decay). Furthermore, over half of the inventory had notable defects or other structural issues.

In addition to removals, 38% of the entire tree stock is recommended for pruning to improve public safety, health, structure, and appearance. Identified pests and diseases were uncommon but several ash suffered from the emerald ash borer. Four trees, two old growth willow, a small ash, and a large poplar were identified as having extensive beaver damage.



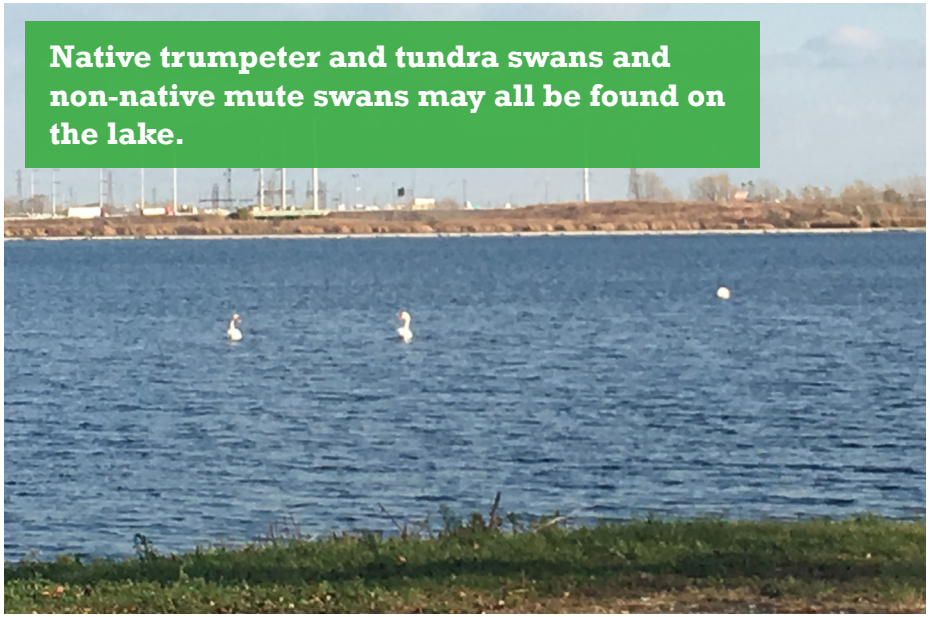
Fish species inhabiting Wolf Lake include largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, redear sunfish, crappie, bullhead, carp, walleye, hybrid muskie, and yellow perch.

Wolf Lake provides critical habitat for many shoreline and marsh birds such as this Blue Heron.

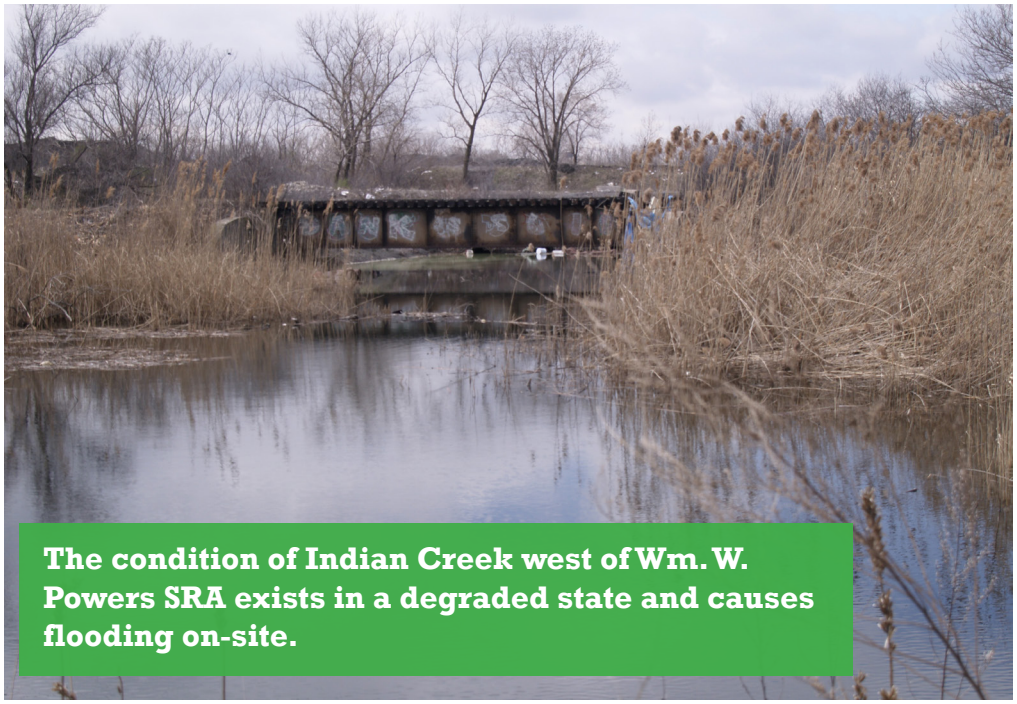
Native birds hosted by the park include cardinals, blue jays, finches, orioles, woodpeckers, teal, mallards, resident and migratory Canada geese, and an occasional bald eagle.

Numerous species of newts, salamanders, and mud puppies call Wolf Lake home.

Wolf Lake is designated as an Illinois Natural Area Inventory site based on its rare species and habitats.



Native trumpeter and tundra swans and non-native mute swans may all be found on the lake.



The condition of Indian Creek west of Wm. W. Powers SRA exists in a degraded state and causes flooding on-site.

There is a large population of beaver on the lake currently that negatively impacts tree health at the site.

Park Activities, Programs, and Operations

Wm. W. Powers SRA is a very well-used park, visited by nearly a half-million people a year. Activities currently available to the public at the Wm. W. Powers SRA site are largely unstructured and non-consumptive recreation that align with IDNR's mission.

Park Activities

Waterfowl hunting is the most unique activity hosted at the park – Wm. W. Powers SRA is the only public place in the City of Chicago or Cook County where a person can legally discharge a firearm. (This, of course, excludes any legal indoor or outdoor shooting ranges.) Hunting is an activity enjoyed by many at the park, particularly local residents. There are 25 hunting blind locations available at the park, with one ADA blind near the State Line Dike. These blinds are awarded in yearly lotteries held in late July. During the hunting season, daily drawings are also held to allocate blinds of absentee blind holders.

Fishing is another popular activity hosted by the site. Fishermen use the site during all seasons, and fishing is allowed both from the shoreline and from motorized boats. The lake is open for ice fishing after the end of waterfowl season, but the park staff do not monitor the ice for thickness, so visitors fish at their own risk. IDNR is committed to enhancing the quality of the fishery at Wm. W. Powers SRA, and to do so regularly stocks Wolf Lake with native fish species.

Nature observation and birding are other popular activities that people participate in at Wm. W. Powers SRA. Many people use the site to walk and jog. People also enjoy cycling through the site. Canoing and kayaking are allowed at the site, and many people would like to see this use expanded at the park through rentals and classes or programs.

Wm. W. Powers SRA is also a popular picnic site in the spring and summer. Each shelter has a capacity for between 50 and 100 individuals and has access to pit toilets (when those toilet facilities are open), one of which is designated as ADA accessible. Demand for picnic space, especially in the spring and summer, regularly exceeds availability, and the infrastructure of the site (particularly restroom facilities) is generally inadequate to support large picnics. And, unfortunately, overuse of the existing facilities coupled with vandalism and improper waste disposal often leaves site toilets in disrepair.

This year, to address issues with restrooms and a current lack of spending authority to fix them, picnic shelter renters are required to bring in port-a-lets at their own expense. This is a practice that is successfully followed by the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and is intended to help alleviate some of the stress on the site's washroom facilities.

Some conflict of activities hosted by the site was cited by stakeholders. For example, the conflict between fishermen

and hunters during hunting season is a huge issue for some. Many other IDNR sites close completely during hunting season, but Wm. W. Powers SRA stays open and fishermen in boats often come in close contact to the hunting blinds. Others are of the opinion that bike trails and natural areas are competing interests that should not both be accommodated at the Wm. W. Powers SRA site.

Park Operations

Wm. W. Powers SRA is operated and managed by IDNR, under the same management structure used at all state parks. At present the site is extremely under-staffed. The existing staff (which include a site superintendent, part-time office manager, and two maintenance staff) cannot keep up with facility and natural resource maintenance or provide adequate programming at the site. An additional staffing challenge facing the site is the impending retirement of the existing site superintendent, anticipated to occur in December 2016.

As a result of limited staff capacity, user vandalism, and theft, hours of operation for both the park as a whole and the Visitor Center are shorter than they have been historically, no longer extending from sunrise to sunset. Some school and community groups are unable to use the site effectively after the 2015 departure of a full-time IDNR staff member whose job was to coordinate visitors and events, answer questions, and share information about the site. Access to bathrooms at the site is not reliable, as bathrooms are often vandalized and significantly damaged by users, forcing staff to keep them locked and posted as out of order. The landscape and park facilities suffer from deferred maintenance, and the perimeter along Avenue O currently presents an overgrown and unwelcoming front door to visitors. Additionally, many of the site's amenities such as the picnic shelters, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, and site furnishings are in a state of disrepair due to deferred maintenance, limited staffing, and vandalism by users. The current personnel situation is frustrating for both park visitors and staff.

Unfortunately, at this time IDNR funding for staffing and improvements is limited. Over the past 10+ years, IDNR has seen an increase in deferred maintenance and a decrease in staff system-wide. As with most other state parks, money to support Wm. W. Powers SRA comes from the state general fund, and at this time the park is not eligible for any additional, alternative sources of revenue from the State of Illinois to fund improvements. However, it is possible that funding from license plates fees and the Recreational Trails Program could be considered for projects at Wm. W. Powers SRA in the future. IDNR's Coastal Management Program is an advocate for Wm. W. Powers SRA, but the federally-funded Coastal program is limited in the types of support it is able to provide. Opportunities for outside funding are also limited at this time. There are no available staff to seek and coordinate funding opportunities (though Coastal staff members have provided some support in this regard), and no friends group or other association exists to accept donations on the park's behalf.

Park Programming
Due to lack of site staff, programming at the Wm. W. Powers SRA site is limited. Educational programs for school children are currently only available for organizations that can provide their own transportation and staff to lead and coordinate the programs.

The site sometimes hosts community events, however some stakeholders said that it is currently difficult to arrange for community events on site due to the loss of a full-time dedicated staff member to help manage the reservations and arrange the events. There is interest in hosting events at the site. In fact, many community members say that a number of existing events would flourish at the site if staffing levels increased.

Currently, there are no coordinated volunteer stewardship programs focused on restoration at the site. Wm. W. Powers SRA is not currently used as a program site for restoration groups such as Calumet 2030, which host programs at neighboring sites like Eggers Grove.

Existing Partners

A number of partners already have a relationship with the Wm. W. Powers SRA site and assist IDNR in implementing some programs, restoration work, and hosting visitors.

IDNR's Coastal Management Program
The IDNR Coastal Management Program (Coastal Program) manages federal funds dedicated to use in Illinois' "coastal area," a geography that includes Wm. W. Powers SRA. Funds from Coastal Program support habitat restoration and planning for recreation and access. Funds do not generally support on the ground improvements or site maintenance. Coastal Program can also provide limited staffing assistance—serving as a facilitator and a convener—and has served this role to help with initiatives at Wm. W. Powers SRA in the past.

Millennium Reserve
Millennium Reserve is a partnership of government agencies, nonprofits, and other organizations that plans and sometimes helps to sponsor improvements in the region. Each individual partner brings resources to the table, and to date, partners have funded a number of planning and improvement initiatives throughout the region. At Wm. W. Powers SRA, the funding for current restoration work at the North Woods to restore a 15-acre wetland area is provided by a federal grant awarded to IDNR on behalf of the Millennium Reserve partnership called "The Millennium Reserve Compact: Uniting to Control Invasives."

Millennium Reserve is currently in the process of becoming a non-profit organization. While it is not expected that Millennium Reserve will become a dedicated funding source in the near term, it is safe to assume that Wm. W. Powers SRA can continue use the Millennium Reserve communication network in the near term. Wm. W. Powers SRA is at the heart of Millennium Reserve, and the partners have responded positively to this planning process.

Suggested Partners

In addition to existing partners, some suggested partner organizations were recommended by a number of stakeholders to help support the site.

Bi-State Advisory Group

In the future, many stakeholders are interested in pursuing opportunities for bi-state cooperation. Although there have been some successful partnerships in trail planning efforts, there is generally limited existing cooperation (and sometimes even competing interests) between the Indiana and Illinois sides of Wolf Lake. This challenge reduces the effectiveness of planning and management initiatives for Wolf Lake as a whole. The effect has been witnessed to different degrees of seriousness, from complications related to fishing licenses to complications enforcing clean water regulations.

Some stakeholders would like to grow a group of partners to work on enhancing bi-state cooperation, specifically focusing on Wolf Lake. This group would serve as a communication and planning vehicle, to help address perceived impacts and could improve the quality of bi-state communication.

Some stakeholders warned, however, that it will be tough to be productive at the grassroots level when there's so much difficulty at the state level. These stakeholders suggested that in order to be successful, an inter-governmental agreement might be more effective than a grass roots campaign.

Friends Group / Conservancy / Foundation

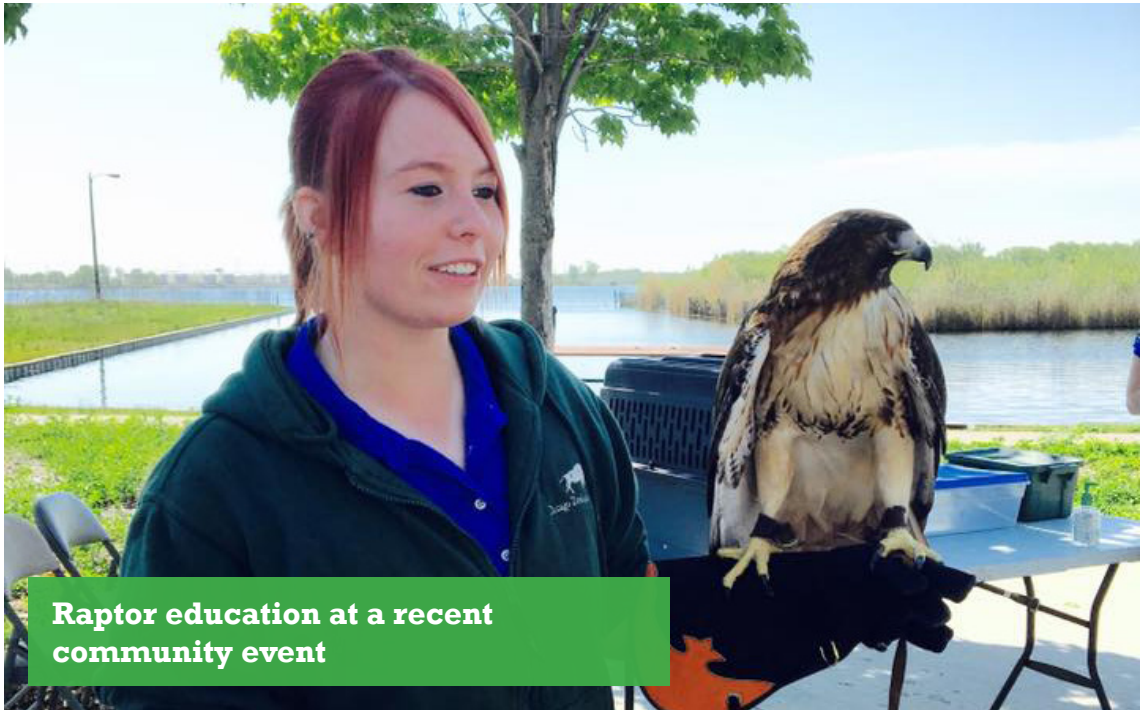
Some stakeholders tried to put a friends group into action 1-2 years ago, but were unsuccessful due to what they felt were bureaucratic hurdles. Many stakeholders feel it is still a viable option to help raise money for the park and assist with programming.

Friends group means something very specific to IDNR. Friends groups operate to enhance, preserve, and protect state sites including interpretive and educational activities in addition to providing an entity for securing funding for park improvements, and are required to have 501c3 status in order to do so. It is important for any friends group to have real and sustained leadership, fundraising potential, and a clear vision. There have been several regional successes on IDNR properties that could be replicated. Friends groups often serve as the volunteer nexus for state parks, and all successful groups manage volunteers for state park sites in some capacity.

Weekend community meeting at the Visitor Center

Fishing in the boat harbor is a popular pastime for park users

Recent Wolf Lake 5K hosted at the Wm. W. Powers SRA site



Raptor education at a recent community event

Students fishing in the harbor adjacent to the Visitor Center

Students planting native vegetation at a volunteer stewardship event hosted at Wm. Powers SRA

A farmers market hosted at Wm. Powers SRA

A student clearing invasive plant material at a volunteer stewardship event at Wm. Powers SRA

Boy Scouts participating in an Open House at the Wm. Powers SRA visitor center

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A key component of planning for the future of the Wm. W. Powers SRA was the engagement of community members and other project stakeholders. As we started the process, we heard that many southeast side residents are suffering from "community meeting fatigue." A number of planning efforts have been ongoing in the southeast Chicago region over the past decade, and many residents feel worn out by public process and distrustful that the process will yield any real outcomes. Despite this fatigue, people showed up at our meetings and responded to our surveys—sometimes in pretty impressive numbers—to offer their input and ask questions about the Wm. W. Powers SRA site. This in itself demonstrates the importance the site already holds for many people locally and regionally. Specific stakeholder groups engaged during the process are described below. In all, over 1,000 responses were collected at outreach events and through web surveys. Over 150 community members attended the open house meetings, and over 800 community members participated in the web-based surveys. The project website received over 700 visitors (with 2,300 page views).

Engagement of the General Public

The general public was invited to learn about the project process and provide input on draft deliverables during each project phase. Our external stakeholder participation process included a number of tools to help enable stakeholder participation. We engaged the community through web-based community surveys, interviews, focus groups, four public open house meetings, and regular meetings with a project Advisory Group. Additionally, all

project deliverables, including summaries of open houses and surveys, were uploaded to the project website for public review and comment.

Staff Liaisons
IDNR staff liaisons, Suellen Burns, Kim Kreiling, Chris Rollins, and Barry Hart, met with us regularly to provide feedback and guidance on project deliverables, coordinate meetings, and assist with project administration (contracts, invoices, etc.).

Stakeholder Interview and Focus Group Participants
Our team interviewed 29 individuals over the course of the planning process. These individuals represented a variety of interests, including (but not limited to): IDNR leadership, park staff, community residents, park users, leadership from community organizations, and leadership from neighboring communities. Participants provided insight on targeted discussion topics related to the site, such as ecology, recreation, trails, and community interests.

Project Advisory Group
The Project Advisory Group provided input during each phase of the project and commented on draft project deliverables. Advisory Group members represented a diverse group of city and state leadership, agency leadership, conservation leadership, community leadership, programming partners, and site user groups. Advisory Group members also helped to promote surveys and public meetings through their networks. Four meetings were hosted with the Advisory Group during the planning process. Organizations and agencies represented on the advisory group included:

- Audubon – Chicago Region / Wild Indigo
- Calumet Ecological Park Association
- Chicago Park District
- Faith in Place
- The Field Museum
- Fishin' Buddies
- Forest Preserves of Cook County
- Fuller Park Community Development Corporation / Eden Place
- Golden Gate Homeowners Association
- Illinois Legislative District 33: State Representative's Office
- National Park Service
- The Nature Conservancy
- Southeast Environmental Task Force
- Southeast Sportsman's Club
- City of Chicago Ward 10 Alderwoman's Office

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An advisory group meeting hosted at the Visitor Center

A variety of partners contributed to the advisory group discussions.

A visitor to the an advisory group meeting contributes to the discussion as part of public comment.

Open house discussion about existing conditions at the site

Open house discussion about existing conditions at the site

Open house discussion about improvements for the site

Open house discussion about local and regional connections

Kids contribute thoughts on site programs and activities

Students walking along the western shore of Wolf Lake

COMMUNITY VISION

Based on our assessment of existing conditions and input from the community and Advisory Group, we derived a series of goals for the Wm. W. Powers SRA. Our vision seeks to distinguish the site and find an identity that complements the mission of IDNR, celebrates the site's urban location, and celebrates the site's natural character that is highly valued by local residents and visitors. **Goals that support this vision for the site are listed below, in order of importance:**

1. **Improve site appearance and functionality**
2. **Create a thriving ecological network by managing, enhancing, and restoring the site's natural communities**
3. **Expand program offerings to meet community needs**
4. **Update recreation facility offerings to meet community needs**
5. **Pursue viable partnerships for programming and operations**
6. **Improve local and regional access**

This following section describes the process by which a community-supported vision for the Wm. W. Powers SRA Site was developed. **The final, community-supported vision focuses on the creation of an accessible and well-maintained recreational open space that supports low to mid intensity recreational uses. It also focuses on strengthening the park's identity locally and regionally.**

Evaluation of Alternatives

Based on the goals for the site, we worked with both the Advisory Group and the broader community to develop a list of potential improvements for the site. We then worked with these groups to review and prioritize these initiatives. To help stakeholders to understand the spatial and programmatic implications of potential initiatives, and ultimately help us develop a preferred scenario, we developed three land use scenarios for stakeholders to review.

The first, a *low-intensity scenario*, envisioned the site as a conservation-focused recreation area. A *mid-intensity scenario* celebrated the ecological significance of Wm. W. Powers SRA alongside its potential as an expanded recreation area. Finally, a *high-intensity scenario* was developed which envisioned Wm. W. Powers SRA as a regional, consumptive recreation hub. Plan scenarios, as well as activities, programs, and infrastructure improvements that could be associated with each scenario were evaluated by stakeholders at a public open house and through a web-based survey. A description of the plan scenarios, as well as prioritized rankings of associated activities, programs, and infrastructure improvements are described on the following pages.

Preferred Scenario

After evaluation options for activities, programs, and infrastructure changes, it was clear that there was a shared feeling that the site was distinctive from its neighbors because of its important wildlife habitat, large open spaces, its cultural and historic significance, and its current and potential connections to regional trails.

Across all platforms of input, comments consistently reflected the expressed need for practical and simple change at the site, including demands to open washrooms, extend hours of operation, maintain existing amenities, and keep the Wm. W. Powers SRA site as natural as possible. As a result, the preferred scenario focuses on the creation of an accessible and well-maintained recreational open space that supports low to mid intensity recreational uses. It also focuses on strengthening the park's identity locally and regionally.

There is no new funding or special budget allocation for implementing the following vision. Rather, this vision is intended to guide IDNR decision-making when it comes to allocating the current (post budget impasse) resources IDNR has for William Powers.

It should be noted that the described preferred scenario presents recommendations for the Wm. W. Powers SRA as if special funding, staffing, and ongoing budget were not limited. Unfortunately, reality is quite different. There is no new funding or special budget allocation for implementing the following vision. Rather, this vision is intended to guide IDNR decision-making when it comes to allocating the current (post budget impasse) resources IDNR has for William Powers. Those resources are based on IDNR's new long-term financial reality, which is much different than the days many community members recall when Wm. W. Powers SRA had longer hours of operation, more robust staff, and fewer deferred maintenance challenges.

Low Intensity Scenario–Conservation Focus

This scenario envisions the Wm. Powers site as a conservation-focused recreation area, and therefore in this scenario a large proportion of the site would be a dedicated conservation area. Activities supported by this concept would include waterfowl hunting, trapping, fishing, and non-consumptive activities like walking, hiking, and wildlife observation. Programming would emphasize restoration activities (such as the removal of invasive species and natural landscape maintenance), site interpretation, and outdoor environmental education. The footprint of the Day Use Area that support picnicking, playgrounds, and concessions would be reduced and located around the visitor's center. Most parking areas and open lawn areas would also be reduced to accommodate lower maintenance, natural landscape. Interpretive and directional signage at the site would be kept to a minimum.

Low Intensity Scenario Evaluation

In an on-line survey, stakeholders were asked to rank the importance of existing and potential *conservation activities, programs, and infrastructure changes* at Wm. Powers SRA. This information helped the project team to prioritize improvements to be included in the preferred scenario.

Potential Conservation Activities

In the evaluation of activities, participants were more interested in non-consumptive recreation activities such as quiet contemplation, observing wildlife, and walking/jogging than they were in fishing, hunting, or guided education sessions.

Below is the full list of conservation activities evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Observe wildlife
2. Take a walk or jog on a dedicated pedestrian path
3. Sit and enjoy quiet contemplation in a natural setting
4. Learn about site ecology
5. Participate in nature-based environmental education at a class or guided walk
6. Participate in site restoration work with an organized group
7. Fish from the shoreline or from a boat
8. Enjoy a nature based playground
9. Learn to fish or hunt
10. Hunt waterfowl or trap beaver

Potential Conservation Programs

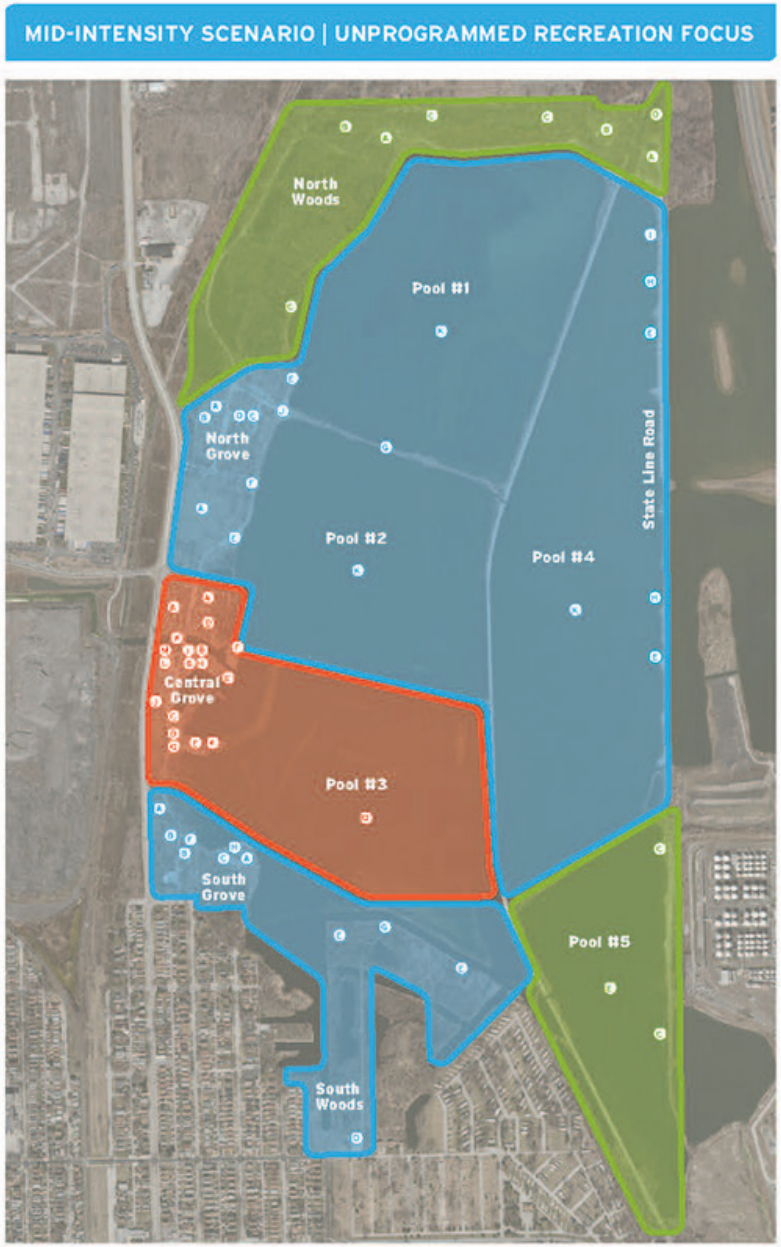
As one might expect based on the priorities for conservation activities identified in the survey, stakeholders are interested in passive, restoration-focused programs at the site. Below is the full list of conservation programs evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Restoration-focused job training program to engage the community with the site and to help control invasive species, improve water quality, and maintain natural landscapes
2. Nature-based environmental education program to coordinate school trips and to teach youth and adults about site ecology
3. Volunteer stewardship program to engage the community with the site and to help control invasive species, improve water quality, and maintain natural landscapes
4. Tree and native plant nursery program to grow plant stock for site restoration activities
5. Outdoor recreation education program

Potential Conservation Infrastructure Changes

Infrastructure changes such as new walking trails, shaded seating areas, interpretive signs, and reduced mowed areas support the participants' apparent want for less group or community activities and more individual exploration and recreation. Reduced picnic shelter areas was not ranked highly, which supports the sites history and continued desire as a beloved community picnic area in the summer. Improvements to hunting amenities was ranked as the lowest priority. Below is the full list of conservation infrastructure evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. New walking trails
2. Shaded seating areas
3. Interpretive signs
4. Reduced mowed turf areas
5. Nature-based playground
6. Improved existing boat launches
7. Reduced parking and paved areas
8. Equipment storage space
9. Reduced picnic shelter areas
10. Accessible hunting blinds



Mid Intensity Scenario–Unstructured Recreation Focus

This scenario celebrates the ecological significance of the Wm. Powers site with its potential as an expanded recreation area. Offerings of unstructured recreation activities at the site would be expanded to include biking and hiking trails, picnicking, canoing and kayaking, primitive camping, winter activities like cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and even community gardening. Programming would still emphasize restoration activities and environmental education, but would be supplemented with more robust self-guided and naturalist-guided site interpretation and programs that support outdoor recreation activities like fishing, paddling, camping, and winter sports. Community events like farmers markets and fun-runs would be included in the program roster.

Mid Intensity Scenario Evaluation

In an on-line survey, stakeholders were asked to rank the importance of existing and potential *unstructured recreation activities, programs, and infrastructure changes* at Wm. Powers SRA. This information helped the project team to prioritize improvements to be included in the preferred scenario.

Potential Unstructured Recreation Activities

In the evaluation of activities, participants were more interested in smaller scale recreation activities such as biking, canoing, and small picnics than they were with larger or more involved activities such as community events, gardening, camping, and soccer.

Below is the full list of unstructured recreation activities evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Bike on a dedicated multi-use trail, fix a flat bike tire at a fix-it station, view a regional bike trail map at an information kiosk
2. Launch a canoe or kayak and paddle around Wolf Lake
3. Picnic with a small group of family or friends
4. Learn about site ecology and regional culture and history
5. Camp at a rustic campsite
6. Snow shoe or cross country ski in the winter on groomed trails
7. Participate in a community event like shopping at a seasonal farmers market or participate in a community fun run
8. Enjoy a seasonal or permanent display of public art
9. Tend your own community garden plot
10. Play a pick up game of soccer with friends or family on a mowed lawn area

Potential Unstructured Programs

The preferred unstructured programs also corresponds with the preferred activities. For instance, canoing and kayaking was a highly rated activity, and learning how to canoe and kayak were preferred programs. Participating in art and community events were not ranked highly. Consequently, these programs are not in demand.

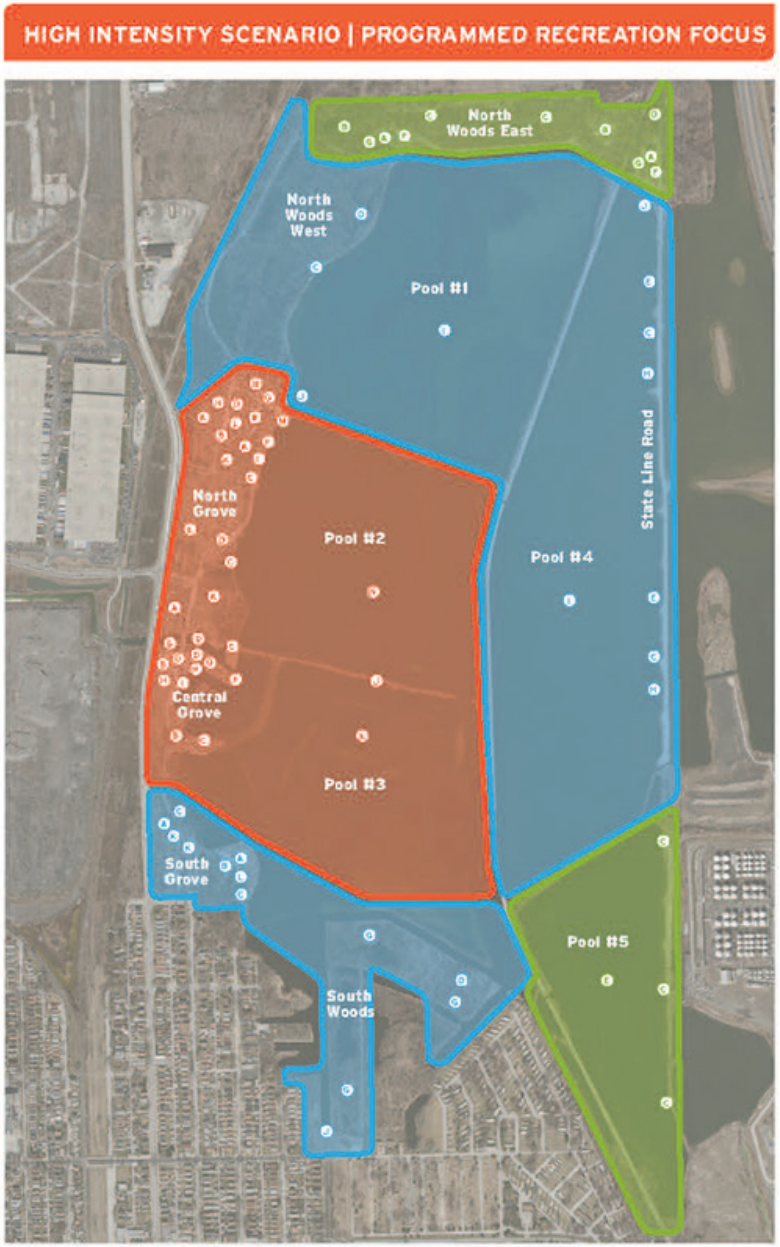
Below is the full list of unstructured recreation activities evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Outdoor recreation education programs to teach youth and adults how to canoe and kayak
2. Outdoor recreation education programs to teach youth and adults how to camp
3. Annual program of local community events
4. Regularly occurring, on-site farmers market
5. Nature-based public art program with temporary or permanent installations

Potential Unstructured Recreation Infrastructure Changes

Improved trail amenities and infrastructure and access to the water for canoing and kayaking is prioritized over areas for larger events and fishing amenities. This is consistent with the stated priorities for unstructured recreation activities and programs. Below is the full list of unstructured recreation infrastructure changes evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Multi-use paved biking and walking trails
2. Regional trail signage, map kiosk
3. Improved canoe and kayak access
4. Interpretive signs
5. Bike fix-it station
6. Primitive camp sites
7. Shade canopies at shoreline fishing areas
8. Fish cleaning stations
9. Bait concessions
10. Mowed lawn area for informal field sports



High Intensity Scenario – Structured Recreation Focus

This scenario envisions Wm. W. Powers SRA as a regional outdoor recreation hub. Programming would still emphasize restoration activities and environmental education, but would be supplemented with robust self-guided and naturalist-guided site interpretation, youth and adult education programming, programs that support outdoor recreation activities, and even regional events like fishing tournaments. Day Use Area, picnic shelters, restrooms, and supporting amenities would be upgraded and would be located throughout the park. Parking and paved areas would be expanded to accommodate large programmed recreation events like group camping, outdoor cultural events like concerts and movies, fishing tournaments, and bike excursions. Concessionaires renting bikes, boats, and selling bait and snacks would be concentrated around the Visitor Center. Fishing and boating access would be expanded with improved boat ramps. A comprehensive interpretive and directional signage program and public art program would also be implemented as part of this scenario.

High Intensity Scenario Evaluation

In an on-line survey, stakeholders were asked to rank the importance of existing and potential *structured recreation activities, programs, and infrastructure changes* at Wm. Powers SRA. This information helped the project team to prioritize improvements to be included in the preferred scenario.

Potential Structured Recreation Activities

Similarly to the unstructured recreation results, participants would rather rent a bike or canoe around Wolf Lake than host community events, enjoy movies or concerts, camp, or host regional sporting events or tournaments. Below is the full list of structured recreation activities evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Rent a bike and tour the regional trail systems
2. Rent a canoe, kayak, or motorized boat and cruise around Wolf Lake
3. Participate in youth or adult education programs or classes at the visitor's center
4. Picnic with a large group of friends, family, neighbors, or colleagues
5. Launch a boat at Avenue K and cruise around Wolf Lake
6. Host a meeting or community event at the visitor's center
7. Buy a snack or sandwich at a good concession
8. Enjoy an evening movie or concert in the park
9. Camp with a large group of friends, family, neighbors, or colleagues
10. Participate in a regional sporting event such as a fishing tournament

Potential Structured Programs

The preferred structured programs that were rated highly (bike and boat rentals) corresponds with the desire for increased biking and boating activities and educational classes. In contrast, food concessions and a program of regional events were not highly ranked. This corresponds with stakeholders' apparent desire for more individualized and independent activities. Below is the full list of structured recreation programs evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Bike rental program
2. Boat rental program
3. Food concessions
4. Annual program of regional events like fishing tournaments or concerts

Potential Structured Recreation Infrastructure Changes

The first two priorities, an observation tower and equipment rentals for boats and bikes, correspond with the preferred activities and programs. Additionally, a fishing pier/overlook is highly prioritized despite the fact that expanded fishing / hunting opportunities did not rank high in the survey. This suggests that the overlook nature of the pier appeals more to the participants than its potential as a fishing space. Below is the full list of structured recreation infrastructure changes evaluated, listed in order of importance based on input from the on-line survey.

1. Observation tower
2. Equipment rental concession (boats and bikes)
3. Fishing pier/overlook
4. Outdoor classroom space
5. Food concession
6. New group picnic shelters
7. Group camping area
8. Amphitheater or small performance space
9. Dedicate a mowed area for events to support outdoor concerts or movies
10. Expanded parking areas

Preferred Scenario

After evaluating stakeholder priorities and suggested options for activities, programs, and infrastructure changes at the site, a preferred scenario was developed. It should be noted that the described preferred scenario presents recommendations for the Wm. W. Powers SRA and not an actual plan of action adopted by IDNR. It is also important to note that these recommendations in their entirety would only be possible to implement if IDNR's ongoing budget, special funding, and staffing were not limited. Unfortunately, reality is quite different. There is no new funding or special budget allocation for implementing the following vision

Day Use Area

The Day Use Area of the park is envisioned to continue to host most of the park's consumptive (active recreation) uses. The south end of the Day Use Area would be highlighted as the park's "front door," a place where visitors could stop to orient themselves to the site and the region before heading on to other park destinations. It would be home to educational facilities including the Visitor Center, a new outdoor classroom area, a new nature-based playground, a regional bike trail hub, and a concentration of the site's group picnic areas. A new, multi-use trail is proposed to run along the west side of the park access road, crossing to the south bank of Indian Creek at the existing bridge, and eventually exiting the park through the south entrance and connecting beyond to the Burnham Greenway. Along the trail, mowed turf areas would be reduced west of the park road, with no-mow fescue areas planted close to the trail, and taller natural plantings bordering the park's perimeter at Avenue O. Picnic areas would be relocated east of the park road, with two new shelters. The first shelter would be sited at the small peninsula just south of the boat harbor and served by a small existing parking area.

The second shelter would be sited at the far south end of the site near the end of the existing park road. Future farmers markets and other community events are envisioned to be staged in the south end of the Day Use Area. Vendor tents for such events could either be lined up along the roadway, or along the new multi-use path. This configuration would allow for more parking to be accommodated in the new parking areas that are proposed to flank the park road.

The north end of the Day Use Area is proposed to function as the park's boating center. This area would include improved boat launch facilities, improved boat trailer parking, a shore launch for canoes and kayaks, a new bait and boat rental concession, and a picnic shelter and restroom building to serve groups using the launch for the day. Similar to the south side of the Day Use Area, a new, multi-use trail is proposed to run west of the park access road. Mowed turf areas would be reduced with no-mow fescue areas planted close to the trail, and taller natural plantings lining the perimeter of Avenue O. This section of trail would end at North Woods, where users could choose to continue north along the park road or along a new multi-use trail that is proposed to run along the shoreline of Pool 1 on the footprint of an old roadbed.

The north end of the Day Use Area is also serve proposed to serve as the area of the site that hosts cultural features and related interpretation. Since many would have to be relocated with the proposed demolition of the old entrance drive, veterans memorial plaques are restored and reset along the new trail, and a "memorial bosque" of trees is planted as an homage to the historic living memorial that once existed in this location.

Day Use Area Recommendations

- (A) Reduce mowed areas in favor of natural plantings
- (B) Improve picnic areas
- (C) Upgrade toilets
- (D) Improve parking and paved areas
- (E) Construct new nature boardwalk
- (F) Construct new wildlife viewing overlook
- (G) Relocate playground
- (H) Relocate Nike missile and veterans memorials
- (I) Construct new multi-use trails
- (J) Remove old park entrance remnants
- (K) Provide shade structures for shoreline fishing
- (L) Plant "Living Memorial Bosque" of trees to accompany relocated veterans memorials
- (M) Improve boat launches
- (N) Provide boat rentals and bait concessions
- (O) Provide bike rentals and a fix-it station
- (P) Construct new outdoor classroom
- (Q) Construct new fishing pier
- (R) Provide trail wayfinding and interpretive signage
- (S) Naturalize boat harbor shoreline
- (T) Resurface State Line Road and provide parking

North Woods

The proposed North Woods trail loop is a one-mile walking and biking loop that would follow the perimeter of the North Woods area. The existing north connection to the Burnham Greenway and Wolf Lake Overlook are would be accessible from the North Woods trail loop. Wayfinding signage and trail-head amenities – using an existing parking area and pit toilet building—are proposed for this location.

The North Woods is proposed to host self-guided interpretation of the site's ecological features. A nature boardwalk would extend into the woods from the east trail, offering an opportunity for interpretive signage relaying the story of the area's habitat and recent restoration efforts. An observation tower is proposed for the North Woods as well. The tower would be sited to allow visitors a view of the lake, natural areas, and neighboring industry in both Illinois and Indiana. The tower could also serve as a regional wayfinding landmark, due to this location's high level of visibility from the well-traveled Chicago Skyway.

North Woods Recommendations

- (C) Upgrade toilets
- (E) Construct new nature boardwalk
- (F) Construct new designated wildlife viewing overlook
- (I) Construct new multi-use trails
- (M) Improve boat launches
- (N) Provide boat rentals and bait concessions
- (R) Provide trail wayfinding and interpretive signage

South Woods

Another natural area, the south woods is disconnected from the main park but is easily accessible by local roads for walkers and bikers. In the near term, the parking area should be improved at this location, walking trails should be formalized. In addition, signage should be updated, and the entrance enhanced to make it clear to the public that the site is state-owned public land and part of the Wm. W. Powers SRA. Long term, the gravel launch at the K Channel should be paved and improved for boaters, however in the near term available resources should be spent on other priority improvements.

South Woods Recommendations

- (B) Improve picnic areas
- (D) Improve parking and paved areas
- (R) Provide site identity signage, as well as trail wayfinding and interpretive signage
- (T) Resurface State Line Road and provide parking

Students taking part in a nature hike at Wm. Powers SRA

PARK ENHANCEMENT PRIORITIES

Based on the community vision and goals for the site, we have developed a prioritized list of key recommendations. Goals for the site are listed below, in order of importance:

1. Improve site appearance and functionality
2. Create a thriving ecological network by managing, enhancing, and restoring the site's natural communities
3. Expand program offerings to meet community needs
4. Update recreation facility offerings to meet community needs
5. Pursue viable partnerships for programming and operations
6. Improve local and regional access

Not everything described will be implementable in the near term. In fact, many of the priorities listed will require long term effort. It is important to recognize that we are not starting with a clean slate at Wm. W. Powers SRA. Numerous baseline infrastructure and operational improvements must be made as a foundation before many of these enhancements can be developed. These "Foundational Projects" for infrastructure and operations are described below. Without the completion of this foundational work, the implementation of many other enhancements will remain difficult.

Foundational Capital Improvements
Basic infrastructure at the park such as roadways, bridges, lighting, sewer, and maintenance-facility infrastructure all require major replacement or improvement before any major expenditures on enhancements would be practical.

Foundational Operational Improvements
Similarly, there are basic improvements in terms of park operations—such as filling vacant staff positions—that should occur before any major programming or partnership opportunities would be practical.

Prioritizing Enhancement Recommendations

Recommendations for appearance and identity improvements, recreation amenity improvements, restoration and site ecology improvements, access and connectivity improvements, and operational and programming improvements are described in this section. Recommendations are prioritized based on three criteria: importance, urgency, and community priority (the latter as derived from survey responses and feedback at community meetings).

High-Priority Initiatives
These initiatives are both important and urgent as well as high priorities for the community. This means that the recommendations are time sensitive or address health, safety, and welfare issues at the site. They also include IDNR's identified responsibilities (e.g., are associated with IDNR's role, directly support IDNR's mission statement).

Medium-Priority Initiatives
These initiatives are important but not urgent. This means that they are not time sensitive but will provide community benefit if attended to pro-actively, could become urgent if they are not attended to, and include IDNR's identified responsibilities (e.g., are associated with IDNR's role, directly support IDNR's mission statement).

Low-Priority Initiatives
These initiatives are not time sensitive but become priorities when special funding becomes available. These initiatives are optional ("would be nice if"), but they have a high level of community support, may be supported by partner organizations, and optimize the features of the site, partnership opportunities, and unique neighborhood location of the site.

Not everything described will be implementable in the near term. In fact, many of the priorities listed will require long term effort. It is important to recognize that we are not starting with a clean slate at Wm. W. Powers SRA, and that numerous baseline infrastructure and operational improvements must be made as a foundation before many of the recommended enhancements may be developed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAND USE, APPEARANCE, AND IDENTITY

To address the first planning goal, "improve site appearance and functionality," we have developed key recommendations for improving site land use, appearance, and identity. Due to deferred maintenance issues as well as issues like the age and declining health of the site's tree stock, the appearance of the site has suffered. Addressing the issue of site appearance – particularly the appearance of the site's Avenue O frontage—was a priority for many stakeholders. There is an opportunity to make some simple changes at the site that will improve site appearance and make the site more welcoming to visitors without the requirement of any foundational infrastructure improvements. There is also an opportunity, through interpretive improvements, to distinguish the site and express a distinct identity. When developed, this identity should complement the mission of IDNR as well as celebrate the site's urban location and its natural character.

$0 - $50k	$$$$$
$50k - $150k	$$$$$
$150k - $500k	$$$$$
$500k - $1m	$$$$$
$1m+	$$$$$

Cost:	Initiative 1:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Implement tree removal, replacement, and protection program	High	• US Forestry Service • IDNR Forestry	High community priority.

Cost:	Initiative 2:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Design and install site signage and wayfinding	Medium	• Millennium Reserve • Coastal Program	High community priority. Should include regional wayfinding elements as well, including regional bike trail maps.

Cost:	Initiative 3:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Improve Visitor Center courtyard landscape	Medium	• Coastal Program	Improving the exterior appearance of the Visitor Center was a high community priority. Intended to include basic landscape improvements like removal of popcorn slag and incorporation of ornamental plantings and possible site furnishings like benches and trash receptacles.

Cost:	Initiative 4:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Design and install site interpretive elements including public art and signage, update of living memorial	Medium	• Under the Bridge • Millennium Reserve • Coastal Program	**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** High community priority. Implementation of interpretive elements may be most practical in conjunction with other improvements like trail development.

Cost:	Initiative 5:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Design and construct Avenue O frontage improvements; Improve main entrance, remove old main entrance	Medium	• Coastal Program (for planning & design)	**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** High community priority. Although not all improvements are dependent on infrastructure changes, some, such as the removal of the old main entrance may be most practical in conjunction with park roadway enhancements.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SITE ECOLOGY & HABITAT

To address the second plan goal, "create a thriving ecological network by managing, enhancing, and restoring the site's natural communities," we have developed key recommendations for preserving and improving site ecology. Maintaining the site as an ecological asset is a priority for the community. Our recommendations are focused on restoration of key natural areas of the site as well as the reduction of manicured lawn on the site (as mowed-turf fields were not indicated as a priority for the community at Wm. W. Powers SRA). This will serve to protect habitat and improve regional environmental quality.

$0 - $50k	$$$$$
$50k - $150k	$$$$$
$150k - $500k	$$$$$
$500k - $1m	$$$$$
$1m+	$$$$$

Cost:	Initiative 1:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Dredge Indian Creek	Medium	• Cal-Chi Rivers Fund	High community priority. Intended for portions of creek on IDNR property. However, conditions west of Wm. W. Powers SRA exist in a degraded state and cause flooding on-site, so partnerships should be sought in order to restore and dredge these off-site sections.

Cost:	Initiative 2:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Restore shoreline of dikes and State Line Road	Medium		High community priority.

Cost:	Initiative 3:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Construct hemi-marsh at Pool 5 ("Hidden Pool")	Medium	• USEPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) • Cal-Chi Rivers Fund	

Cost:	Initiative 4:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Restore native vegetation and reduce mowed turf grass areas	Low		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** Conversion of some mowed grass area to native grasses/forbes may be beneficial for habitat and aesthetics enhancement, e.g., a corridor of varying width along Avenue O. It needs to be kept in mind that native plantings take years to establish. If prairie species are used, then prescribed burns or periodic mowing will be required to maintain the prairie. Note that mowed grass areas are currently used for day use recreation, and areas converted to native grasses will decrease the already small area available for day use recreation activities and facilities.

Cost:	Initiative 5:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Naturalize shoreline of "boat harbor" near Visitor Center	Low		

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SITE PROGRAMMING

To address the third plan goal "expand program offerings to meet community needs" and support the fifth plan goal, "pursue viable partnerships for programming and operations," we have developed key recommendations for site programming. At this time, the best investment of IDNR program dollars is to cultivate partners to program the site.

Initiative 1:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a boat rental program	High		High community priority.

Initiative 2:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a bike rental program	Medium		High community priority.

Initiative 3:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a nature-based environmental education program to coordinate school trips and to teach youth and adults about site ecology.	Medium		

Initiative 4:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a volunteer stewardship program to engage the community with the site and to help control invasive species, improve water quality, and maintain natural landscapes.	Low		

Initiative 5:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish an outdoor recreation education program to teach youth and adults how to canoe, bike, kayak, fish, and camp	Low		

Initiative 6:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a concession program for on-site bait sales	Low		Could be provided by a bait vending machine.

Initiative 7:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish an annual calendar of community events, including a regularly scheduled farmers market	Low		

Initiative 8:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Establish a restoration-focused job training program to engage the community with the site and to help control invasive species, improve water quality, and maintain natural landscapes.	Low		

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SITE FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

To address the fourth plan goal "Update recreation facility offerings to meet community needs" we have developed key recommendations for site infrastructure improvements.

$0 - $50k	$$$$$
$50k - $150k	$$$$$
$150k - $500k	$$$$$
$500k - $1m	$$$$$
$1m+	$$$$$

Cost:	Initiative 1:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Repair, improve, and open restrooms	High	• Coastal Program	**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** Very high community priority. Replacement and reconstruction of existing toilet building should be considered, as well as replacement of pit toilets with flush toilets. May require upgrade of sanitary sewer and water lines.
Cost:	**Initiative 2:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Design and construct new dedicated walking and biking trails ("shared-use path" per AASHTO) and paved bike lanes along north park road.	Medium	• Coastal Program (for planning & design)	High community priority. Disturbance to existing natural areas should be minimized when considering location of new trails. Safety of visitors should also be considered when locating new trails.
Cost:	**Initiative 3:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Design and construct new shaded seating areas	Medium		High community priority.
Cost:	**Initiative 4:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
FUNDED	Improve boat ramps at Pools 1, 2, and 4	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**
Cost:	**Initiative 5:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Improve shore fishing nodes, including accessible nodes and shade structures with benches	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**

$0 - $50k	$$$$$
$50k - $150k	$$$$$
$150k - $500k	$$$$$
$500k - $1m	$$$$$
$1m+	$$$$$

Cost:	Initiative 6:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Design and construct new observation tower	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** Ranked highly on Survey #3. Would function for wildlife viewing and landscape viewing. The tower and its access route should be accessible to people with physical disabilities.
Cost:	**Initiative 7:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Design and construct new concession building	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** Could house boat rentals, bait concessions, and possibly a food concession near the boat ramps. Depending on services, could function with vending machines instead of staff.
Cost:	**Initiative 8:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Design and construct new nature-based playground	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**
Cost:	**Initiative 9:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Install new bike fix-it station	Medium		
Cost:	**Initiative 10:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Design and construct new outdoor classroom in Visitor Center Courtyard	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**
Cost:	**Initiative 11:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Relocate all picnic shelters to the east side of park road, near the lake.	Medium		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.** Allows for unobstructed multi-use trail on the west side of the park road.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPERATIONS

To address the fifth plan goal, "pursue viable partnerships for programming and operations," we have developed key recommendations for site operations. At present the site is extremely under-staffed and as a result, hours of operation are limited, programming is limited, and maintenance is deferred. And, unfortunately at this time, IDNR funding for staffing and improvements is limited. An additional staffing challenge facing the site is the impending retirement of the existing site superintendent, anticipated to occur in December 2016. Expanding the operating hours for the park from sunrise to sunset and opening the Visitor Center more frequently was a top priority for stakeholders – an issue that may best be addressed by the addition of site staff.

	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
Initiative 1: Fill the soon to be vacant Park Superintendent position	High		
Initiative 2: Revise picnic shelter rental policy: evaluate localized rental operations, evaluate increased rental rates, and formalize port-a-let rental policy.	High		
Initiative 3: Extend operating hours so park is again accessible to visitors from sunrise to sunset.	Medium		
Initiative 4: Open the Visitor Center more often	Medium		Currently, the Visitor Center is only open on weekdays between 10AM and 2PM. These operating hours do not align with the times when most people are visit the park.
Initiative 5: Fill site program staff / site interpreter position	Medium		
Initiative 6: Support the creation of a "friends-of" group	Low	• Coastal Program	

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESS & CONNECTIVITY

To address the sixth plan goal, "improve local and regional access," we have developed key recommendations for improving site access and connectivity. The site's proximity to regional trail networks is a valuable asset that should be enhanced. Regional wayfinding to the site and wayfinding within the site should also be addressed. Finally, in the long-term, parking at the site should be addressed to minimize impervious surface while efficiently serving site recreation amenities.

$0 - $50k	$$$$$
$50k - $150k	$$$$$
$150k - $500k	$$$$$
$500k - $1m	$$$$$
$1m+	$$$$$

Cost:	Initiative 1:	Priority	Potential Partner	Notes:
$$$$$	Complete IDNR's portion of the bi-state Wolf Lake Trail	Medium	• Coastal Program(for planning & design) • REI • Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)	High community priority.
Cost:	**Initiative 2:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Strategic acquisition of land at south end of site	Medium	• GLRI	High community priority.
Cost:	**Initiative 3:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Improve bus access and construct sidewalks along Avenue O	Low	• Chicago Department of Transportation	**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**
Cost:	**Initiative 4:**	**Priority**	**Potential Partner**	**Notes:**
$$$$$	Consolidate site parking	Low		**Dependent on foundational infrastructure change.**

High-Priority Initiatives

As mentioned previously, there is no new funding or special budget allocation for implementing the recommendations of this report. Rather, the recommendations are intended to guide IDNR decision-making when it comes to allocating the current (post budget impasse) resources IDNR has for William Powers. Those resources are based on IDNR's new financial reality, which is much different than the days many community members recall when Wm. W. Powers SRA had longer hours of operation, more robust staff, and fewer deferred maintenance challenges. The recommendations can, however, help IDNR understand the communities current vision for the park, as well as help present a strong case for special funding opportunities and new partnerships to augment Wm. W. Powers SRA's ongoing appropriation from the state budget.

Bearing this in mind, four initiatives have been ranked as highest priority for the Wm. W. Powers SRA site, and are listed below:

1. Repair and open washrooms.
2. Fill the soon to be vacant Park Superintendent position
3. Implement tree removal, replacement, and protection program
4. Revise picnic shelter rental policy to evaluate localized rental operations, evaluate increased rental rates, and formalize port-a-let rental policy.