

**POTAWATOMI STATE PARK (DOOR COUNTY)**

[Potawatomi State Park](#), established in 1928, is the most southerly of the five Door County State Parks. It is located just outside the City of Sturgeon Bay and is a popular camping destination for Door County visitors.

The park has 1,200 acres of gently rolling upland terrain bordered by steep slopes and rugged dolomite cliffs. The park features about 2.5 miles of shoreline on the Bay of Sturgeon Bay and Sawyer Harbor. The boat landing and shore fishing are very popular.

Potawatomi State Park is home to nine miles of walking/hiking trail, eight miles of off-road bike trail, approximately 8.5 miles of snowmobile trail, approximately eight miles of groomed cross-country ski trail, and 2.5 miles of winter hiking/snowshoe trail. The Eastern Terminus of the Ice Age Trail, a 1,000-mile National Scenic Trail, is located within Potawatomi State Park.

| Property Designation | State Park |
|----------------------|------------|
| DNR and Other Lands  | Map M-1    |
| DNR Fee Acres        | 1,141.64   |
| DNR Easement Acres   | 78.86      |
| Total DNR Acres      | 1,220.50   |
| NRB Acquisition Goal | 1,259.00   |

From the cliffs of the Niagara Escarpment at the north and east sides of the park, one can see across Sawyer Harbor and the bay of Green Bay.

*Park Niche*

*Potawatomi State Park, located on the shores of Sturgeon Bay, is the gateway to Door County. The park is a popular family destination for hiking, biking, camping, boating, fishing and more. The park features miles of trails, camping opportunities, miles of shoreline, and bluffs of the Niagara Escarpment.*

Existing Recreation Conditions**Camping**

Daisy Field Campground (NR 44 Development Classification: Modern)

The two loops of the campground offer a total of 123 sites, 40 with electricity. Showers, flush toilets and a sanitary dump station are provided during the camping season. Overflow parking for campers is currently insufficient, and the shower building is undersized since it has seen increased use with the addition of the Group Campground.

Group Campsites (NR 44 Development Classification: Modern)

Four group sites, all non-electric, are available in the park; they can accommodate up to 36 people each. Two of the group sites can accommodate trailers and motor homes; the others can accommodate tents only.



**Accessible Camping Cabin (NR 44 Development Classification: Modern)**

The fully accessible cabin, which may only be rented to people with disabilities and their guests, can accommodate up to six people. Amenities include a bathroom with wheel-in shower, two hospital beds and a Hoyer lift, heating, air conditioning and a screened porch.

**Day Use Areas****South Shore Picnic Area (NR 44 Development Classification: Modern)**

The shelter at the Picnic Area on the south shore has two fireplaces and electrical service. The shelter may be partially opened in warmer months. This modern day use area also provides picnic tables, a vault toilet, water, a playground and four small parking lots. This area also serves as a trailhead for the off-road bike trail through the park and the Hemlock hiking trail. A fishing pier was damaged in 2014 and removed.

**Campground Shelter Area (NR 44 Development Classification: Modern)**

The Campground Shelter has a fireplace and electricity. Nearby parking lots and a playground are available for use.

**Ice Age Trail Day Use Area (NR 44 Development Classification: Rustic)**

Nearby parking and a vault toilet are provided along the eastern terminus of the Ice Age Trail. A 75-foot-tall wooden observation tower is located here as well. The tower was recently inspected for decay by engineers and wood structure specialists. It was found to be unsafe and will be dismantled in the future. The area will be maintained as a trailhead for the Ice Age Trail.

**Trails**

Visitors to Potawatomi State Park enjoy its extensive system of trails. Table 15 is a list of trails and their classifications. Note that some trails overlap each other with differing uses for the winter and the summer and some trail use occurs on park roads that are closed in the winter. A designated trail is one that is designed, maintained and limited to specific uses. Currently, trails in Potawatomi are available for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoeing. Designated trails are identified by signage and are shown on the official map of the park.

*Table 15: NR 44 Trail Development Classifications for Potawatomi State Park Trail*

| Trail Name                             | Miles     | Trail Classification |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| <b>Ancient Shorelines Nature Trail</b> | 0.5 miles | Moderately Developed |
| <b>Ice Age Scenic Trail</b>            | 2.8 miles | Primitive            |
| <b>Hemlock Trail</b>                   | 2.6 miles | Primitive            |
| <b>Tower Trail</b>                     | 3.6 miles | Primitive            |

|                                      |           |                      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| <b>Off-Road Bike Trail</b>           | 8.0 miles | Moderately Developed |
| <b>Cross-country Ski Trails</b>      | 8.5 miles | Lightly Developed    |
| <b>Winter hiking/Snowshoe Trails</b> | 2.5 miles | Primitive            |
| <b>Snowmobile Trails</b>             | 8.0 miles | Primitive            |

### ***Boat Launch***

The Potawatomi State Park Boat Launch on Sawyer Harbor provides two paved boat launch lanes and has 13 parking stalls for cars and approximately 70 stalls for trailer/vehicle combinations. Up to three launching piers are provided. One vault toilet is provided.

### ***Roads and Parking Lots (See Map M-2)***

Potawatomi State Park has approximately 11 miles of roads. About 4.5 miles are open year-round to the public, while another five miles are open on a seasonal basis. Table 16 provides a summary of the roads maintained by DNR in the park.

*Table 16: Potawatomi State Park Road Classifications*

| <b>Road Classification</b>  | <b>Miles of Public Roads</b> | <b>Miles of Closed Roads</b> | <b>Miles of Seasonal Roads</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Primitive</b>            | 0                            | 0.85                         | 0.09                           |
| <b>Lightly Developed</b>    | 0                            | 0.03                         | 0                              |
| <b>Moderately Developed</b> | 4.42                         | 0.1                          | 5.29                           |
| <b>Fully Developed</b>      | 0                            | 0                            | 0                              |

### ***Support Facilities***

|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS)</b> | The PEVS is located at the park entrance and currently provides a small visitor services area, staff office space and a private employee bathroom. Outside area includes a self-registration station, signage, parking lot, entrance/exit roads, and landscaping |
| <b>Camper Dump Station</b>                  | The sanitary dump station is located across the exit road behind the PEVS.                                                                                                                                                                                       |



### ***Other Recreational Facilities***

#### **Nature Center and Park Store**

- The Nature Center is maintained and operated by Park staff. It is mostly a self-guided experience. The Park Store is operated through a subcontract with the friends group. Both are housed in the same building, which is centrally located relative to the north and south campground loops. They are popular destinations for campers and park visitors, providing nature information, camping necessities and bike and watercraft rentals. However, the building and the associated parking lot are too small for the current use, and the building needs repair.

#### **Amphitheater**

- This outdoor theater seats up to 70 people. Seasonal park staff and outside guest speakers present programs regarding nature study and local history as well as other related topics. The facility includes a stage, wooden bench seating, electrical outlets and lights. The adjacent parking stalls are generally held for presenters and those with disabilities. Additional parking is located at the nearby Nature Center and Park Store.



## Property Management, Development and Use

### ***NR 44 Land Management Classification***

Potawatomi State Park is divided into three NR 44 land management classifications (Map M-4). They are Recreation Management Area – Type 4 (643 acres), three Native Community Management Areas totaling 557 acres, and a small Special Management Area (9 acres). Type 3 Recreational Use Setting shall be applied to all land management classification areas. Land management areas with Type 4 Recreational Use Setting Subclassification will have the additional objectives and prescriptions described in the Recreation Objectives for Type 4.

### ***Recreation Management***

#### Recreation Management Objectives (Entire Property)

- Provide access to Sturgeon Bay and Green Bay for fishing and boating of all kinds.
- Provide education and interpretation regarding the natural and cultural history of the park and its current flora and fauna.
- Provide a system of recreational trails (uses include snowmobiling, cross-country skiing (classic and skate), snowshoeing and winter/fat tire biking, hiking and biking), including the eastern end of the Ice Age Trail, by maintaining existing trails.
- Redesign the park's trail system to improve the visitor's experience and trail sustainability.
- Provide views of Sturgeon Bay, Sawyer Harbor and Green Bay, and the Door County shoreline.

#### Recreation Management Prescriptions (Entire Property)

##### Short Term Prescriptions

- Maintain existing roads and parking lots at current development levels to provide access to existing recreation opportunities.
- Maintain and repair the Nature Center and Park Store to allow the building to continue serving in its current capacity.
- Continue to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities, including various trail recreation experiences, boating, fishing, picnicking and winter uses such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.
- Continue agreements with friends group to enhance the park visitor's experiences.
- Working with partners, provide education and interpretive activities, services and features.

##### Long Term Prescriptions

- The existing trails for Potawatomi State Park will be redesigned to create a more efficient and sustainable trail system. The department will enter into an agreement with a consultant to develop the trail system design, including recommended trail alignments and design standards for each trail use. The allowed uses for the summer trail system will be hiking, mountain biking and bike touring. Winter trail uses will include snowmobiling, cross-country skiing (classic and skate), snowshoeing and winter/fat tire biking. Parking lots and trailhead support facilities will also be improved as needed to serve the new trail system.



- The level of development, open and closed status, and miles of roads will remain consistent with the Land Management Classification. Add an observation platform at one of the existing scenic overlooks; the exact location will be determined in the future.

Recreation Management Objectives (Type 4 Recreational Use Area)

- Provide overnight camping opportunities to address needs in the region.
- Provide areas for day use by maintaining and upgrading existing facilities.

Recreation Management Prescriptions (Type 4 Recreational Use Area)

Short Term Prescriptions

- Dismantle the observation tower. The area, including the parking lot and vault toilets, will continue as a modern day use area.
- Modify nine existing campsites to include electrical hookups.
- Working with partners, add an accessible fishing pier to the South Shore Picnic Area.

Long Term Prescriptions

- A new Park Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) will be built at Potawatomi State Park. The exact location for the new PEVS has not been determined. The new PEVS will provide similar but expanded programming to meet the needs of the park visitors.
- A new Nature Center/Park Store will be built at Potawatomi State Park. The exact location for the new building has not been determined, but it is key that the new location be a central location relative to the campgrounds. Further study is necessary before a specific location is selected. The new building will provide similar but expanded programming to meet the needs of the park visitors.
- Reconstruct shower/toilet building in the campground to provide an expansion of toilet and shower facilities.
- Existing campsites may be converted to electrical sites, within the limits of the state statutes regarding state park campgrounds.
- Develop an open-air shelter at the old ski hill overlook (capacity up to 50 people). When the shelter is developed, the old ski hill overlook will be considered a modern day use area.
- Develop an enclosed shelter (capacity 50 people) with fireplace and paved parking for up to 20 vehicles at the Group Camp. In addition to serving campers, this facility will serve as the cross-country ski trailhead and a winter warming shelter.
- Continue to work with local partners to study the redevelopment of the old ski hill into a winter use area.
- Add 10 to 20 parking stalls in the campground area.

**Resource Management**

The land cover for Potawatomi State Park can be found on Map M-3.



Table 17: Potawatomi State Park Land Cover

| Land Cover                           | Current     |            |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------|
|                                      | GIS Acres   | % Cover    |
| Upland Broad-leaved Deciduous Forest | 339         | 31         |
| Upland Coniferous Forest             | 275         | 26         |
| Upland Grass                         | 81          | 8          |
| Oak                                  | 24          | 23         |
| Forested Wetland                     | 137         | 13         |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>1079</b> | <b>100</b> |

Resource management on DNR lands is organized by land management classification areas. The areas described below are depicted on Map M-4.

#### Area 1: Recreation Management Area – Type 4

Classification: Recreation Management Area  
 Recreational Use Setting: Type 4  
 Size: 643 acres

#### Management Objectives

- Provide and maintain attractive and safe grounds for intensive outdoor recreation activities.
- Maintain, protect and enhance the area's natural features, including the Niagara Escarpment and old forest character, to provide a high quality scenic setting for non-motorized recreational use and snowmobiling.

#### Management Prescriptions

- In forested locations maintain a healthy tree canopy. Where feasible, promote the growth and retention of larger trees.
- Remove hazardous, diseased and defective trees.
- In appropriate locations maintain and promote native shrubs for screening.
- Provide and maintain turf areas as appropriate.
- Conduct other management and maintenance activities as needed, such as mowing, brushing, erosion control, and maintaining landscaping associated with public use facilities.
- Any applicable, approved management practice or tools may be used.



### Area 2: Potawatomi Niagara Escarpment

Classification: Native Community Management Area

Size: 147 acres

*Site Description:* This site represents a significant portion of the Niagara Escarpment within Potawatomi State Park.

Below the steep escarpment face, the forest of white birch and northern white cedar provides habitat for rare plants, such as climbing fumitory, and rare snails, including state threatened and endangered species. Unlike other places within the forest, there is a well-developed shrub layer of mountain maple and red-berried elder on these talus slopes. These areas provide habitat for the least flycatcher and veery, both Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) (WDNR 2005).

*Significance:* This site provides habitat for a diverse group of rare terrestrial snails that have occupied the area since the last Ice Age. These snails have restricted ranges, limited dispersal ability, very specific biotic and abiotic habitat requirements, and are vulnerable to management activities that alter temperature, moisture, and/or food supplies. Talus slopes contain vents that carry cold air, moisture, and nutrients that some snail species are dependent on. These vents, located throughout the slope and on bedrock outcrops on top of the escarpment, are vulnerable to compaction and filling-in.

*Management Considerations:* Impacts from activities that disturb the soil or open the forest canopy, can create warmer and drier conditions, increase sedimentation, introduce invasive plant species, and cause vent compaction, all of which adversely affect the rare snails. To minimize the potential impacts of activities above and below the escarpment face, this site includes a 200-foot buffer for the escarpment face.

Creating buffer zones that allow uses that do not negatively impact the core area of the Niagara Escarpment is one technique outlined in the [Niagara Escarpment Plan](#). This Niagara Escarpment Plan guides management of the Niagara Escarpment in Ontario, an area designated in 1990 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Biosphere Reserve.

Additional management considerations include invasive species control, reducing off-trail use, and road and trail maintenance that minimizes impacts to the endangered and threatened species at the site. A lookout tower is located within the site near the old ski hill.

#### *Management Objectives*

- Passively manage the forests to provide ecological reference areas.
- Protect the Niagara Escarpment by minimizing the potential impacts of activities above and below the escarpment face.
- Attain and maintain old forest characteristics on suitable sites.
- Allow for natural recruitment of coarse woody debris (large diameter timber) and standing snags.
- Protect and enhance rare species populations and their habitats.

#### *Management Prescriptions*

- Within a 200-foot buffer zone of the escarpment face, do not conduct management or development (e.g., timber harvesting, new parking lot or building construction), or allow uses



that would disturb soil and forest canopy cover and negatively impact the core habitat area of the Niagara Escarpment.

- Allow natural processes to shape the structure of the forest communities.
- Rare species habitat enhancement could include: rerouting trails, installing cordwalks, and selectively removing canopy cover by hand felling trees for increased sunlight.
- Following a catastrophic event (e.g. wind, fire, ice damage, forest pests), salvage may be done along trails, access roads, and other infrastructure for human safety after consultation and direction by the Parks and district ecologist, forester and property manager. Additional salvage may be conducted if it fits with the ecological considerations for the site.

### Area 3: Northern Mesic Forest

|                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Classification:          | Native Community Management Area |
| Recreational Use Setting | Type 3                           |
| Size:                    | 235 acres                        |

*Site Description:* This site features a Northern Mesic Forest with sugar maple, red oak, American beech, white birch, and hemlock. Also present are low dolomite cliffs, scattered boulders, and Northern Dry-mesic Forests dominated by white pine, red oak, and white birch.

Exposed bedrock within this site can contain vents that provide moisture and nutrients to rare terrestrial snails on the face of the Niagara Escarpment.

*Significance:* This site provides vital migratory bird stopover habitat for up to 10,000 neo-tropical land birds each spring and fall, harbors exposed bedrock with vents that provide moisture and nutrients to rare species on the Niagara Escarpment. The site offers opportunities to promote older forest characteristics in a landscape dominated by agriculture and small woodlots. One rare species was located within the site.

*Management Considerations:* This site warrants special management consideration including invasive species control.

### Management Objectives

- Protect the Niagara Escarpment by minimizing the potential impacts of activities above and below the escarpment face.
- Maintain, protect and enhance the area's natural features, including the old forest characteristics, to provide a high quality, scenic setting for non-motorized recreational uses and snowmobiling.
- Promote the development of old forest characteristics where applicable, particularly northern red oak stands.
- Allow interior white birch stands to succeed to northern hardwoods.
- Protect and enhance rare species populations and their habitats.
- Allow for natural recruitment of coarse woody debris (large diameter timber) and standing snags.
- Invasive species objective



### *Management Prescriptions*

- Within a 200-foot buffer zone of the escarpment face, do not conduct management or development (e.g., timber harvesting, new parking lot or building construction), or allow uses that would disturb soil and forest canopy cover and negatively impact the core habitat area of the Niagara Escarpment.
- In consultation with the Parks and NHC ecologists, use intermediate thinnings or other selective harvest techniques of northern hardwoods to accelerate the development of old forest characteristics where appropriate.
- Use uneven-aged, extended rotation techniques to accelerate the development of large diameter timber where appropriate
- Rare species habitat enhancement could include: rerouting trails, installing cordwalks, and selectively removing canopy cover by hand felling trees for increased sunlight.
- Following a catastrophic event (e.g. wind, fire, ice damage, forest pests), salvage may be done along trails, access roads, and other infrastructure for human safety after consultation and direction by the Parks and district ecologist, forester and property manager. Additional salvage may be conducted if it fits with the ecological considerations for the site.
- Invasive species prescription

### **Area 4: Northern Dry-mesic Forest**

|                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Classification:          | Native Community Management Area |
| Recreational Use Setting | Type 3                           |
| Size:                    | 175 acres                        |

*Site Description:* This site is located at the southern end of Potawatomi State Park. It features a forest with red and white pine, red oak, and big-tooth aspen. Deer herbivory has impacted the shrub and saplings layers with few tree or shrub species less than five feet tall.

*Significance:* Older pine forests provide a unique opportunity for conservation within this landscape. The site provides migratory bird stopover habitat for up to 10,000 neo-tropical land birds each spring and fall.

*Management Considerations:* There is an opportunity for managing older pine forests. Invasive species control is necessary.

### *Management Objectives*

- Protect the Niagara Escarpment by minimizing the potential impacts of activities above and below the escarpment face.
- Maintain, protect and enhance the area's natural features, including the old forest characteristics, to provide a high quality, scenic setting for non-motorized recreational uses and snowmobiling.
- Manage the Northern Dry-mesic Forest to promote larger blocks of older mixed conifer-hardwood forest.
- Protect and enhance rare species populations and their habitats.



- Allow for natural recruitment of coarse woody debris (large diameter timber) and standing snags.

### *Management Prescriptions*

- Within a 200-foot buffer zone of the escarpment face, do not conduct management or development (e.g., timber harvesting, new parking lot or building construction), or allow uses that would disturb soil and forest canopy cover and negatively impact the core habitat area of the Niagara Escarpment.
- In consultation with the Parks and NHC ecologists, use uneven-aged, extended rotation techniques to accelerate the development of large diameter timber where appropriate.
- Rare species habitat enhancement could include: rerouting trails, installing cordwalks, and selectively removing canopy cover by hand felling trees for increased sunlight.
- Following a catastrophic event (e.g. wind, fire, ice damage, forest pests), salvage may be done along trails, access roads, and other infrastructure for human safety after consultation and direction by the Parks and district ecologist, forester and property manager. Additional salvage may be conducted if it fits with the ecological considerations for the site.

### Area 5: Administration and Maintenance

Classification: Special Management Area  
Size: 9 acres

The management objective is to provide and maintain areas and facilities for the administration and maintenance support of the property. Additional administrative policies and directives may apply.