



## Welcome

Here in Dane County, we are fortunate to manage over 12,000 acres of parks, natural areas, and trails for residents and visitors to enjoy year-round.

Whether it be fishing, canoeing, camping, snowshoeing, hiking, disc golf, or one of many other activities, Dane County Parks offers countless opportunities to unwind, spend time outdoors, and make memories with friends and family. I hope you find this guide helpful and that it unlocks a new adventure for you to take at one of our many outdoor recreation destinations.



Joe Parisi  
Dane County Executive

## Accessibility

Dane County Parks is committed to providing facilities that are accessible to everyone. Some of our accessible features include:

**Accessible campsites** at each of our five campgrounds.

**Hard-surface trails** at the Badger Prairie and Capital Springs dog parks.

**Rider mounting assistance platform** in the equestrian area at Donald County Park.

**Accessible fishing piers** at Fish Camp, Lake Farm, Riley-Deppe, Salmo Pond, Stewart Lake and Token Creek County Parks and the Jenni & Kyle Preserve.

**Hard-surface, shared-use bicycle/pedestrian trails** throughout the county.

The **Jenni & Kyle Preserve** is a unique park that was created to serve children and persons with permanent disabilities. The park offers accessible fishing access, picnic areas, trails, wheelchair swings and a shelter.



## Park Policies

**Hours:** Park properties are open 5:00 am to 10:00 pm daily unless otherwise posted. Park users are allowed to access park properties after hours if they are registered for camping or for the purpose of fishing, launching a watercraft, or hunting. Wildlife areas do not have hour limits. Some park facilities are closed during the winter from November 1st until May 1st.

**Firewood:** Firewood that originates outside of Dane County is NOT allowed in the parks. Please visit our Firewood Regulations webpage for more information.

**Pets:** Dogs are welcome in our park system in several different ways. See the "Dogs in Parks" section to learn more. Horses are allowed on designated horse trails only and must be kept under control.

**Personal Conduct:** No noisy, drunken, or disorderly person shall be permitted to remain in the park. It is illegal to deface, destroy or vandalize any park property or natural growth. Use or possession of controlled substances and/or paraphernalia, as identified in Chapter 161, WI State Statutes, is prohibited.

**Alcohol:** An alcohol permit is required for any group over 25 people where alcohol is being consumed whether you provide the alcohol or someone attending your event brings their own.

## Fees and Permits

Visiting and hiking in Dane County Parks is free. Some activities require a reservation or a permit. Reservations can be made online or by calling the parks office (608) 224-3730. Permits can be purchased at most parks and trailheads or can be purchased online. Visit [www.reserve Dane.com](http://www.reserve Dane.com) to learn more.

Activities requiring a permit or reservation are marked by this symbol.

Special permits may be required for public meetings, tournaments and other events. Call the parks office at (608) 224-3730 to learn more.

## Camping



Dane County Parks offers electric and non-electric campsites for tent or RV camping at five different park campgrounds. Popular amenities at some campgrounds include shower facilities and electrical hook-ups; free wi-fi is available at Lake Farm. Accessible campsites are available at all campgrounds.

The campgrounds provide many opportunities for outdoor fun and recreation. Four campgrounds (Lake Farm, Babcock, Mendota, Token Creek) are conveniently located within 10 miles of downtown Madison.

Dane County Parks also has six group camping sites for groups to enjoy the camping experience together. These can be reserved by youth groups, organizations, clubs, or for gatherings with family and friends.

Dane County Parks provides several unique camping experiences including:

- backpack/walk-in (Ice Age Trail properties)
- boat (Mendota)
- equestrian (McCarthy)
- winter (Brigham)

**Reservation notes:** Campsites are available on a first-come first-served basis or by reservation. Visit the parks website for more information about reservations.

Dane County Parks provides the only boat camping opportunities on Lake Mendota.



## Hiking Trails



Lake Farm County Park  
Samantha Haas

Discover the many scenic hiking trails in Dane County that wind through forests, prairie lands, historical areas, and along hillsides with breathtaking views of the landscape. Explore the fresh water springs and scenic vistas at Donald County Park or the secluded lake and hilly terrain at Stewart Lake County Park. Soak in the history of the Native American mound sites and tall grass prairies of the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way, or the winding trails and historic chapel at Indian Lake County Park.

With hiking trails on 36 Dane County Park properties, you are sure to find a trail that will quickly become your new favorite.

Floating pan boardwalk systems, used statewide to minimize impacts to wetlands, were first designed by Dane County Parks.



Dane County is home to segments of the Ice Age Trail, one of 11 National Scenic Trails in the United States. The trail traverses some of Wisconsin's most scenic landscapes, following the western extent of the most recent glacier some 10,000 years ago. One of the best places in the state to view a terminal moraine is along the trail as it passes through Prairie Moraine County Park. More information can be found on the Ice Age Trail Alliance website: [iceagetraill.org](http://iceagetraill.org)

## Biking & Mountain Biking

Dane County has over 100 miles of bike trails that connect communities, parks and natural resource areas. With a variety of routes and terrains, there is something for everyone.

The Capital City State Trail, developed by Dane County, is one of the most popular shared-use bicycle/pedestrian trails in the county. The paved trail connects to the Military Ridge and Badger State Trails. It also connects to the Lower Yahara River Trail which includes one of the longest non-motorized boardwalk bridges in North America and offers stunning views of Lake Waubesa. Use this expansive trail system to explore the countryside and grab lunch at one of the many communities that are connected to these trails. Looking for something shorter? Try one of the rustic hard-surface bicycle trails at Viking County Park, Pheasant Branch Conservancy, or CamRock County Park or the paved Ice Age Junction Trail which runs through Badger Prairie County Park.

Dane County also offers many opportunities for mountain bikers. CamRock County Park has over nine miles of excellent mountain biking trails for riders of all skill levels. These trails were developed with help from Capital Off-Road Pathfinders. Beginning riders can develop their skills on the easier trails at Badger Prairie County Park or the Seminole mountain bike trails in the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way. The public is also welcome to attend or participate in cyclocross races held each year at CamRock and Badger Prairie County Parks.

Permits are required for biking on designated mountain bike trails in the Dane County Park System. Biking on paved or gravel bike trails in Dane County Parks does not require a permit unless on a state trail such as the Capital City State Trail.



CamRock County Park  
Mike Rezyak

## Equestrian Trails



Donald County Park  
Ron Lutz II

Escape your daily routine and enjoy the natural beauty Dane County has to offer on horseback. Equestrians have access to more than 26 miles of trails throughout five different parks, each with its own unique features and terrain.

**Donald** (8.4 miles inside park, 17.5 miles outside park) offers a solid day of riding with varied scenery including restored prairies, woods, and rock outcroppings. A rider mounting assistance platform is available.

**McCarthy** (4.2 miles) has multiple beginner level loops for a couple hours of riding.

**Silverwood** (4.6 miles) is a great option for a half-day or after-work ride with trails through fields and woods with very few rocks.

**Token Creek** (2.5 miles) trails are fairly flat and suitable for novice riders.

**Walking Iron** (5.8 miles) offers flat, wide riding trails along mixed hardwood forest and views of Black Earth Creek. It's also a great place to take your driving pony.



Donald County Park  
R. Farrell

## Historical/Cultural

Dane County has several properties with important historical and cultural features.

**Halfway Prairie School** operated from 1844-1961 and is the oldest rural elementary school in the county.

**Hauge Historic District Park** (Town of Perry) surrounds the Hauge Log Church built in 1852 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Lake View Hill Park** served as a county tuberculosis sanatorium from 1930-1966. The buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and remnant structures help tell the story of the sanatorium.

**Schumacher Farm Park** was donated to Dane County Parks by Marcella Pendall Schumacher and is a showcase of early 1900s farming practices.

**The Lake Farm Archeological District** was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 after an archaeological survey identified 32 prehistoric sites at Lake Farm County Park with artifacts dating back to the Late Woodland period, around 8,000 BCE.

**Tenney Park Lock & Dam** is part of the larger City of Madison Landmark Site that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

## Interpretive Signs/Education

Come for adventure and leave with a story. Several sites within the Dane County Park System have interpretive panels that tell the story of the landscape and highlight special features found at the property. This creates a strong sense of place that helps visitors engage with a site's natural and cultural history, and allows our parks to serve as outdoor classrooms.



Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area  
Samantha Haas

## Henry Vilas Zoo

The Henry Vilas Zoo, a Dane County facility, is one of only a few free, community-supported zoos in the country. Since opening to the public in 1911, the zoo has continued to add exhibits and attractions that educate and delight zoo-goers of all ages, while helping to strengthen the connection between humans and our environment. [www.vilas zoo.org](http://www.vilas zoo.org)



# Dane County PARKS & RECREATION

## Disc Golf

Dane County Parks provides two premier disc golf courses, both known for being well-maintained and beautifully groomed. The award-winning Vallarta-Ast 27-hole course at Token Creek is recognized as one of the top courses in the United States and hosts prestigious events with national and worldwide competitors. The Capital Springs 18-hole course is laid out over rolling glacial drumlins surrounded by picturesque prairie areas and offers bicycle access off the Capital City Trail.



Token Creek County Park

## Dogs in Parks



Dogs are welcome in the Dane County Park System at both on-leash and off-leash sites.\* A county dog permit is required for dogs on-leash and off-leash and is also good for off-leash dog parks in Madison, Middleton, and Sun Prairie.

**Off-leash:** Seven regional dog parks provide off-leash dog friendly fun; each park offers its own unique scenery and features to explore. Enjoy the rolling hills and prairie at award-winning Badger Prairie and Prairie Moraine dog parks. Play in the water at Indian Lake, Viking and Yahara Heights dog parks. Small dogs enjoy their own separate areas at Badger Prairie, Capital Springs and Token Creek dog parks.

**On-leash:** On-leash dogs are also welcome on all county park system lands - over 12,000 acres to explore with your furry friend.

\* A full list of requirements and rules is available on our website.

Dane County Parks was one of the first park systems in the nation to develop off-leash dog parks and is recognized as a national leader.



Badger Prairie Dog Park

## Hunting

**Public hunting** is available in designated Wildlife Areas in the Dane County Park System. Requirements are very similar to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources public hunting areas. Some Wildlife Areas have additional rules which are posted on the parks website and on an informational kiosk at the public access point for each property. Hunters should check the parks website before visiting for a complete list of rules and use requirements.

**Archery hunting** opportunities for fall deer and turkey hunting are available exclusively through a popular Limited Access Archery Permit Program. In late July, archers may apply for a permit in an online lottery, and in August, a computer randomly selects winners. The permit allows hunters to access a specified portion of nearly 5,500 acres of land. The Park Commission developed the program in 2001 to help reduce deer numbers in park areas where hunting is not usually allowed. Youth hunters may hunt in conjunction with permit holders.

\* Check with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for hunting license requirements.

## Foraging



Sugar River Wildlife Area Basco Unit

Foraging for edible fruits, nuts and mushrooms is allowed on all Dane County park properties and offers a fun and unique way to connect to the outdoors. Foraging opportunities include apples, blackberries, black raspberries, hickory nuts, morel mushrooms, pears, plums, and a number of other fruits. Dane County does not apply pesticides to fruit trees or bushes. Please note that foraging is not allowed on planted vegetable garden plots within parks. Guidelines and suggested foraging locations are available on the parks website.

## Fishing

Dane County has some of the best and most diverse fishing opportunities in Wisconsin.

The Yahara chain of lakes provide abundant fishing for a variety of species throughout the year and are especially well known for their fantastic panfishing. Lakes Waubesa, Monona and Wingra all offer excellent muskie and bass fishing. Lake Mendota is a destination for anglers from all over the state, offering exceptional fishing for bass, pike, walleye, catfish, and panfish. Lake Kegonsa provides excellent perch and walleye fishing, particularly in the winter months.

The beautiful scenery and quiet solitude of the southwestern Driftless Area offers coldwater streams that have received national recognition for their excellent trout fishing. Dane County has acquired nearly 24 miles of streambank easements that provide public access to these streams and is a leader in improving cold water habitat in these areas. Maps of public streambank easements and shorefishing opportunities are available on the parks website.

In the far northwest corner of the county, Crystal and Fish Lakes provide exceptional fishing opportunities for panfish and largemouth bass. The Jenni & Kyle Preserve offers shorefishing opportunities for kids under the age of 14.

\* Check with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for fishing license requirements.



Jenni & Kyle Preserve

## Swimming & Beaches

Dane County Parks offers three beaches that visitors can enjoy for free. The secluded lake at Stewart Lake County Park offers a sandy beach and swimming area with a nearby picnic shelter, play equipment, and hiking trails. Goodland and Mendota County Parks both offer Clean Beach Treatment Systems which use a flexible curtain and chemical-free water treatment process to create a safe swimming area with clear, beautiful, algae-free water.



Mendota County Park

## Lake Access

Dane County lakes, rivers, and streams offer abundant opportunities for boating, fishing and paddling adventures. Facilities range from modern, paved boat landing areas with fish cleaning stations to secluded canoe launches. Lake access sites also provide plowed parking lots and restrooms in winter months for ice fishing at Upper Mud Lake, Lake Farm, Goodland, Fish Camp, and Mendota County Parks.

Parking at a designated lake access site to fish from shore or access the water with a canoe/kayak requires a lake access permit even if you don't have a trailer. Information about water trails, lake access maps, boater safety, and flotation requirements are available at the Dane County Parks office or on the website.



Lake Farm County Park

## Winter Recreation



Winter offers new ways to play in the Dane County Park System. There are many activities, from snowshoeing to ice fishing. Even a simple hike is a special experience in the snow. Hit the trails and try cross-country skiing, winter mountain biking, or snowmobiling. Indian Lake is popular for cross-country skiing and sledding with its hilly terrain and warming house. Snowshoe trails are also right across the street from Indian Lake at Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area. CamRock County Park is the premier spot for winter mountain biking for both beginner and advanced riders.

Visit the parks website for up-to-date trail conditions and a special Dane County Parks Winter Recreation Activity Guide, which provides details and maps of winter activities in the park system.

**Free activities**

- snowshoeing
- sledding
- cross-country skiing (on ungroomed trails)

**Activities requiring a permit**

- cross-country skiing (on groomed trails)
- snowmobiling
- winter camping (Brigham)
- winter mountain biking
- ice fishing/lake access
- dog parks



## Volunteer Program

Dane County Parks depends on the help and support of volunteers to keep our park system beautiful. Individual volunteers and nineteen friends groups adopt specific parks, help advocate for park properties, fundraise, provide maintenance, and host a variety of public events. The dedication of these groups and individuals is what brings the parks to life.

With your support we can continue to make our great places even better. Volunteering is a wonderful way to give back and develop a deeper connection to the parks and trails you love.



To learn more about how you can get involved, visit: [www.danecountyparks.com/volunteer](http://www.danecountyparks.com/volunteer)

## Lussier Family Heritage Center



Lussier Family Heritage Center

The Lussier Family Heritage Center is a unique facility located within the Capital Springs Recreation Area at Lake Farm County Park. The lodge-style building features banquet halls, a patio and fire pit, and a large second-story porch which offers spectacular views of the surrounding prairie landscape and stary night sky. The center has a volunteer program and hosts many free educational events. There are also nature and bike trails leading to and from the main building.

The center is available for meetings, weddings, private parties, and special events. For reservation information, call (608) 224-3604 or visit: [www.lussierheritagecenter.com](http://www.lussierheritagecenter.com)

## Contact Information



**Dane County Parks Main Office**  
Land & Water Resources Department  
5201 Fen Oak Drive, Room 208  
Madison, WI 53718  
(608) 224-3730  
[dane-parks@countyoofdane.com](mailto:dane-parks@countyoofdane.com)

Learn more about parks, activities, permits and reservations at:

[www.danecountyparks.com](http://www.danecountyparks.com)

Cover photo: Ron Lutz II, Stewart Lake County Park



## Donations & Memorials

Your generous donation will help us continue to maintain and improve the Dane County Park System. A variety of donation and memorial options are available. Learn more about the many ways you can give by visiting:

[www.danecountyparks.com/donate](http://www.danecountyparks.com/donate)  
or calling (608) 224-3730

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