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# Silverwood County Park

## ADOPTED MASTER PLAN

Dane County, Wisconsin

September, 2016



*View of Daylilies in the vicinity of the Farm Ruin Site east of the farmstead, near Bingham Road and STH 106.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dane County Park Commission

William Lunney, Chair  
Kyle Richmond, County Board Supervisor  
Dave Ripp, County Board Supervisor  
Christine Haag  
Mary Schlaefer  
Dan Wisniewski  
Tom Thoresen

Town of Albion

Friends of Silverwood Park



*Public gathering at Silverwood County Park, October 2013.*

2016 RES-152

APPROVAL OF THE SILVERWOOD COUNTY PARK MASTER PLAN

Dane County Parks has completed a master plan for Silverwood County Park. The County currently owns approximately 300 acres within the recreation park boundary. The plan includes proposed improvements for lands within the park and also includes general recreation and resource protection recommendations for lands surrounding the park.

The master planning process evaluated existing agricultural, natural and recreational resources within the project area and incorporated public, stakeholder and staff input to create recommendations found within the plan. The public input process included a series of meetings from January of 2014 through June of 2016.

Recommendations within the plan include agricultural education facilities and activities, picnic shelter, access (for accessible fishing and/or canoe/kayak launching) to Rice Lake and Sweet Lakes, hiking and equestrian trails, toilets, and prairie and savanna restoration. Many of the plan recommendations will be contingent upon support and involvement from partner organizations such as the Friends of Silverwood Park.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors and the Dane County Executive adopt the Master Plan for Silverwood County Park as an element of the Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Dane County Park Commission, County Board of Supervisors, and the County Executive thank the Town of Albion and all of the citizens and stakeholders for their time and effort in assisting with preparation of the plan.

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Silverwood County Park will offer residents and visitors to Dane County and south central Wisconsin a unique opportunity for passive recreation and an opportunity to learn about agriculture.

The land was generously donated to Dane County in 2003 by Irene Silverwood. It is in keeping with the spirit of Irene Silverwood's wishes that the park be dedicated for agricultural education and passive recreation.

The park is located approximately 2.5 miles from the City of Edgerton and 2 miles from Interstate Highway 90/39. The landscape of Silverwood was formed by the last glaciation that covered the great lake states some 10,000 years ago. Current vegetation includes 50 acres of woodland, 5,000 feet of transition shoreline along Rice and Sweet Lakes, 6 acres of grassland and 190 acres of farmland. The terrain is rolling with steep banks rising from the lake shorelines, resulting in potentially beautiful overlooks of Rice Lake and the adjacent countryside.

Currently, the park facilities are under development. A rustic lake access site has been developed on Sweet Lake and a boat portage has been established to access Rice Lake. Hiking trails are under construction and should be open late in 2016. Park wayfinding signage is planned for 2016 and 2017. The Friends of Silverwood Park (FOSP) and the Edgerton School District have already conducted agricultural education activities, including harvest festivals, community picnics and garden planting during the master plan process.

The masterplan process evaluated existing conditions of the woods, water bodies and farmland, incorporating public stakeholder and staff input to establish recommendations found in this report. The planning process included two public information meetings on January 30, 2014 and December 10, 2015. In addition, the Friends of Silverwood have provided much input through the entire process of conceptual planning through masterplanning. The following vision statement was created by the Friends of Silverwood during the conceptual planning effort:

“As Silverwood Park educates the public on the broad and diverse aspects of Wisconsin agriculture – past, present and future, the park celebrates the rich cultural history of agriculture in Dane County as well as demonstrating innovative agricultural practices and land stewardship that sustains the land for future generations.”

The County and FOSP anticipate that Silverwood County Park will be operated as a public-private partnership. The County will provide basic support and

operation of the traditional recreational amenities and the Friends will provide support and operation of the gardens and agricultural education.

Silverwood County Park is expected to become a very popular regional destination for agricultural education, as well as a destination for local recreational use with its lake access and wooded trails.

Dane County Parks intends to honor Irene Silverwood's wishes by encouraging the presence of partner organizations that can create and support agricultural education at the Park. As time and resources allow, Dane County Parks will work cooperatively with the Friends of Silverwood County Park, as well as with other organizations that are working with the Friends, to support agricultural education and related activities.

Major plan recommendations include:

- Create a regional 300 acre county park
- Utilize Silver Lane as the park entrance
- Create equestrian access and parking that can also serve as a major event overflow parking area for 530 vehicles
- Create 4 miles of equestrian use trails within the park and encourage equestrian group to develop a trail system outside the park to provide additional length
- The Friends of Silverwood Park have asked to keep all outbuildings. The FOSP will be responsible for maintenance, public use and access of such buildings. If any buildings are deemed unsafe or not maintained, the buildings need to be removed.
- Provide a handicapped accessible (ADA) fishing pier at Sweet Lake
- Provide a rustic boat ramp and canoe/kayak landings at both Sweet and Rice Lakes
- Provide over seven miles of hiking trails
- Provide remote camping site for groups
- Incorporate two historic farm ruin sites into public features with the silos becoming observation towers
- Restore 93 acres of restored oak savanna
- Maintain 99 acres of agricultural fields
- Create up to 15 acres of permaculture
- Remodel old stone farmhouse into visitor center and meeting hall with public restrooms
- Provide paved parking for 13 vehicles
- Construct vault toilets to serve as year round restrooms
- Add large future storage shed to support park operations



- Develop barn and 12 acre pasture to support future livestock.
- Create Public Picnic shelter
- Construct a greenhouse
- Construct an Educational Dorm
- Construct a Learning Center
- Construct an Amphitheater
- Create art and sculpture garden viewing areas
- Create a one-acre orchard

Future planning and detailed construction drawings will be required for many of the recommendations found within this plan. This master plan should help guide in the development of the park for the next 10-15 years. As the agricultural education and recreation use continues to grow in the future, this plan will need to be revisited and amended to reflect future needs.

## **II. PLANNING PURPOSE**

The purpose of this plan is to create a long term vision through a public consensus building process for how public lands at Silverwood Park will be developed and managed that will balance recreation with agricultural education and resource protection.

## **III. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Silverwood County Park is located in the far southeast corner of Dane County near the City of Edgerton, on the Dane/Jefferson County Line. The location of the park is very desirable, as there were no other Dane County Park resources in this corner of the County.

Irene Silverwood donated her farm, of nearly 300 acres, to Dane County, to be used for park, recreation, conservation, research, education and agricultural purposes in 2001. "Education is my life, and I want this land to be used for education." - as reported in her 2003 Wisconsin State Journal obituary, by Beth Williams.

Mrs. Silverwood's husband, Russell Silverwood, served on the Dane County Board of Supervisors from 1949 to 1963, while being Chair of the Town of Albion Board, and was a long-standing member of the Dane County Agriculture and

Finance Committees and Fair Board. Irene was a career business education teacher in Rockford and Edgerton for 44 years.



According to her obituary, the couple had thought about donating the land well prior to Russell's death in 1988.

The property had been in the Silverwood family since 1870.

*An early photo of the Stone House, viewed from the south.*

#### **IV. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY**

The master planning process began with a public kickoff meeting held at the Town of Albion Town Hall, on January 30, 2014.

A public information meeting was held at the Town of Albion Town Hall on December 10, 2015 to present the Draft Master Plan recommendations being considered for inclusion in the plan.

As a result of very positive feedback at the public information meeting and no additional comment following the meeting, the plan is to be posted on the Dane County Park website along with the Master Plan document for a 30 day review. Following this review period the plan will be presented to the Dane County Plan Commission, Dane County Park Commission, and Dane County Board.

Notifications of public information meetings were sent to all landowners adjacent to the planning area boundary and press releases were printed in both Wisconsin State Journal and Edgerton Reporter Newspapers. Dane County Parks also created a website for the master planning process that included all project information and an online feedback form.

## V. INVENTORY AND SITE ANALYSIS

During the Concept Plan phase of the project, inventory and site analysis, based on personal observation and County mapping tools, helped to reveal aspects of the park that could be used to create the Master Plan. The inventory and analysis is shown graphically in maps that are contained in the appendix to this plan.

The **Existing Buildings** graphic shows the current layout of the outbuildings.

The **Topographic Inventory and Analysis** graphic helped to identify the areas of topography that would be of interest. These areas were field verified for good views, kettle locations, as well as areas that were less steep, suitable for trails and preferred access routes to Rice Lake from the woods.

The **Soils Analysis** graphic identifies the soils mapping units and indicates which soils are considered prime farmland or not. Recommendations as agricultural use vs prairie are based on their suitability for farming. Steeper slopes, those greater than 6%, generally are not as suitable for farming at Silverwood.

### Natural Resources Inventory and Analysis

The **Whole Park** map identifies existing land statistics including total park acreage, woodland acreage, wetland acreage, grassland acreage, farming acreage and the total shoreline.

The **Woods** map shows a more detailed scale, suitable to delineate the proposed new woods trails and trails that have been utilized through the woods in the past.

The **Existing Uses and Public Access** graphic shows how the park was currently used as of January 23, 2014. It shows a canoe carry-in launch and parking lot at the lake access addition off of State Highway 106 and the 2.5 mile perimeter hiking/walking trail.

The **Pre-Settlement Vegetation** graphic shows the map by Robert W. Finley, UW Madison, created from mid-1800 land survey notes, when Wisconsin was first surveyed. It shows that prairie and oak openings were located here at that time.

The **Historical Air Photos of 1949, 1968 and 2010** graphic provides additional evidence that the density of the woods has increased dramatically over time. The 1949 air photo shows significantly less density than subsequent photos.

The **Inventory and Analysis Summary** graphic is an amalgamation of selected observations and insights that were derived from the inventory and analysis planning phase. There are notations regarding water quality, existing and potential access to water, steep slopes, views, soil quality, existing trails and special areas.

## VI. OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan provides the countywide vision for future conservation, land management, recreation and trail needs over a five year period. It is useful for helping to determine what types of park and recreation facilities should be considered when developing new parkland areas. The latest adopted plan identifies the following recreation needs over the next 5 years for all of Dane County:

- Trails (Particularly mountain biking, snowshoeing, multi-use regional)
- Wildlife Viewing Opportunities
- Water Access Facilities (fishing, kayaking)
- Camping
- Picnicking and Shelters
- Disc Golf
- Dog Exercise Areas
- Hunting & Target Archery

Please note, although these needs have been recommended for the County as a whole, this plan will only be recommending those activities that are suitable and appropriate to Silverwood County Park.

There has been some preliminary discussion with the Rock River Trail Initiative on how Silverwood might be connected to the Rock River Trail Bike Route via a City of Edgerton route spur. Potentially, the bike route could continue from Silverwood to CamRock County Park. Investigation would need to be conducted to determine what the preferred route might be.

In addition to the previously mentioned plan inputs, proposed recreation needs recommended in this plan were also derived from public comment heard during the planning process. As future lands are added within the project area boundary, other facilities and recreation uses will be considered that are deemed suitable, based on future site analysis and public input.

### EXISTING ACTIVITIES

#### The Friends of Silverwood

The Friends of Silverwood have actively held many events during the master planning process. The goals of these events were to raise public awareness, interest, involvement and support of the park. Events have included: harvest festivals, tomato tasting with the Renegades 4-H group, a three week summer school program, public tours, veggie tales, a Chamber of Commerce meeting, painting of outbuildings and garden planting and harvesting during the master plan process. In addition, the Friend's volunteers have grown over 1,000 pounds of produce that has been donated to the Edgerton Community Outreach. While using organic methods, produce has included spinach, lettuce, collard greens, kale, Swiss chard, tomatoes, squash, peppers, onions, beans, potatoes, kohlrabi, turnips and tomatillos.

### Edgerton School District

The Edgerton School District (ESD) has established gardens and harvested produce over the past several years. ESD agricultural achievements have included donating over 5,000 pounds of produce, including tomatoes, spinach, carrots, kale, broccoli, peppers, cabbage, onions, snap peas and potatoes to the Edgerton School District Food Service, Edgerton Community Outreach, a local food pantry and Innovation Kitchens. The field work has been through volunteer efforts. Volunteers have been teachers, Future Farmers of America (FFA) members and parents of FFA members. The ESD follows organic principles, but does not intend to seek organic certification. Grant money has been secured to help with projects, including \$2,000 for mulch. The ESD has indicated that they might need up to an additional ten acres, phased in over several years, to foster beginning farmers.

The District is working on methods to extend the growing season, grafting tomatoes and experimenting with different mulch colors. The ESD has also expressed an interest in establishing a one or two acre orchard. It would need to be intensively managed, irrigated, trellised and fenced.

They have also held their Freshman Summit Day at the Park, with the goal of helping incoming freshman get to know each other and the teachers they will have at the High School. Freshman Summit Day activities have included trail clearing, clearing of invasive plant species, painting of the farm outbuildings and mulching of trees.

### Operation Fresh Start

Operation Fresh Start (OFS) has established a garden and harvested produce over the past two years that is used to feed the students of OFS. Produce has consisted of potatoes, peppers, onions, tomatoes and carrots, among others. The fields have been worked by OFS youth participants, staff and some volunteers. Most of the produce has been used in their kitchens to feed youth in the OFS program, with some produce being donated to Second Harvest. They plan to produce organically in the future and propose to use the existing hoop house.

OFS currently grows on 1/3 acre and has expressed an interest in gradually expanding up to eleven acres of commercial farming through phasing over the next ten years. In three years, they plan to start utilizing a new OFS building, off site, that will be used for value added processing of the produce. After eleven years, the building is expected to be fully operational.

Over the past several years, they have cleared trails through the woods, cleared the old farm ruin sites of hazards and have begun work on the Stone House remodeling project.

### A Note on Existing Activities

The organizations described above have been active at Silverwood County Park to varying degrees through 2015. These organizations may or may not continue to be active at the Park in 2016 and beyond, depending on various factors such as organizational capacity. Dane County Parks welcomes partner organizations at the Park and anticipates that the partners will change over time.

## **EXISTING RECREATION USES & FACILITIES**

The Town of Albion prohibits motorized watercraft on Town lakes including Rice and Sweet Lakes. Fishing and ice fishing are perhaps the most popular current recreational activities at the park. Wildlife observation and canoeing also occur on the lakes. The lake access site off of STH 106 provides a place to launch watercraft. This plan recommends continuing to provide these recreation uses on public lands where appropriate.

## **WATER QUALITY of RICE & SWEET LAKES**

A *Survey of Rice Lake* was concluded in November 2011.

As explained in the report, Rice Lake is a seepage lake; defined as a lake whose principle source of water is precipitation or runoff. As with most seepage lakes in southern Wisconsin, there is an excessive input of nutrients that leads to overly dense growth of aquatic plants, blocking sunlight and hence the loss of fish, due to lack of oxygen in the water.

According to the interviews associated with the survey, during years where there are higher water levels, the fishing tends to improve. Most recently, the water levels have been higher.

The survey makes a number of recommendations, all with the goal of reducing eutrophication.

The *Survey of Rice Lake*, is included in the Appendix to this plan. It was performed by Dave Marshall of Agrecol Environmental Consulting, LLC and Pete Jopke of Dane County Land and Water Resources Department. It was funded by the Small-scale Lakes Planning Grant Project.

## **VII. FRIENDS OF SILVERWOOD COUNTY PARK MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION**

As can be seen on the Friends of Silverwood website, the mission statement for our partner at Silverwood is as follows:

Silverwood Park educates the public on the broad and diverse aspects of Wisconsin agriculture – past, present and future. The park celebrates the rich cultural history of agriculture in Dane County as well as demonstrating innovative agricultural practices and land stewardship that sustains the land for future generations.

Furthermore, the vision as established by the Friends includes the following aspects:

To Educate - Provide educational facilities, job training, and resources for the public, farmers, and youth to learn how food, fuel and fiber are grown processed and distributed

To Innovate - Provide access to a demonstration farm which offer opportunities for agriculture research to grow crops that have cultural, historical and economic significance.

To Produce - Support the production of food, fuel and fiber to demonstrate environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic equity.

## **VIII. DANE COUNTY PARKS VISION FOR SILVERWOOD COUNTY PARK**

As with other Dane County Parks, Silverwood County Park will become a destination for park users seeking solitude and passive recreational activities such as walking, birding, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, horseback riding and picnicking.

Dane County Parks intends to honor Irene Silverwood's wishes by encouraging the presence of partner organizations that can create and support agricultural education at the Park. As time and resources allow, Dane County Parks will work cooperatively with the Friends of Silverwood County Park, as well as with other organizations that are working with the Friends, to support agricultural education and related activities.

## **IX. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many of the following plan recommendations are presented graphically on the preferred alternative master plan for the park at the end of this document.

### **A. PLANNING FOR DIVERSITY OF SPECIES**

#### **Diversity in the landscape will result in diversity in the fauna.**

It is important to recognize that with this ambitious vision, development of the park will take many years to accomplish and even then, it may not take the exact form that is represented in the Preferred Alternative Master Plan map presented at the end of this document. However, an underlying, guiding goal of this master plan is to develop a landscape that provides diversity of habitat across the park. Through diversity of habitat, diversity of wildlife will result. This will be achieved by having quality lakes, a healthy woods, permaculture to match the site conditions and an oak savanna, providing opportunities for bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife to find a place to call home.

According to the Natural Heritage Inventory - Wisconsin DNR Data Access Township Tool, The Town of Albion has several threatened species and a plant community that have been documented. These may be located at Silverwood. However, further investigation is required to determine the extent or whether they are found at Silverwood. They include:

- *Cypripedium candidum* or Small White Lady's-slipper, blooming in late May to early June, is a threatened plant found in calcareous fens and moist prairies.
- The plant community, wet-mesic prairie, occurred in large wetlands, on gently rolling glacial moraine, where there were few natural barriers to wildfire. This community type is rare.
- *Nycticorax* or Black-crowned Night-Heron, is listed as a special concern. It prefers freshwater wetlands dominated by bulrush and cattail, with small groves of brush. It is fully protected by federal and state laws under the Migratory Bird Act.

### **B. TRAILS**

Several different trail types will be found at Silverwood. The total length of all hiking trails is approximately 7.4 miles.

- Perimeter Path - The 16 foot wide perimeter path will be a simple, periodically mowed grass trail suitable for hiking/walking, horseback riding



and snow shoeing and Nordic skiing in the winter. It also will provide for service and ranger vehicle access.

- Agriculture and Prairie Trails - Also suitable for hiking/walking, snow shoeing and Nordic skiing, these periodically mowed grass trails will cross through the oak savanna and around and through the agricultural areas. They will provide access to the outdoor classroom kettles, as well as the ridge area north of the farmstead, with higher elevations and good views of the park and beyond. These trails will be used by authorized vehicles to access the agricultural fields that are remotely located.
- Woods Trails - The woods trails will mostly follow ridges and routes that are less prone to erosion to provide for hiking/walking and horseback riding. Other trails that cross steeper sections will be available to reach areas with good views, but will not be suitable for horseback riding due to the greater likelihood of erosion. All woods trails will be cleared to a minimum of 12' wide to allow for service and ranger vehicles.
- Farmstead Trails - In the vicinity of the farmstead, there will be a limestone path meeting ADA accessibility requirements. It will provide access to the stone house, public restroom and parking. With future development, ADA compliant walks should be provided to facilities such as the learning center, dorm and amphitheater.

### **C. ROADS**

Several road types are planned for Silverwood.

- Silver Lane will remain the entry road. The roadway is in fair to poor condition with the asphalt failing. Silver Lane, is a Town of Albion road. It is plowed in the winter by the Town. The road also services a neighboring property. Keeping Silver Lane as the entry to park has the ecological and cost advantage of not building another road. Stopping sight distance along STH 106 has been measured to greatly exceed the required 250 feet for the posted 35 MPH speed limit. For large special events, visitors will be directed to drive into the park on Silver Lane, use the gravel parking area until full, then continue (in the same direction) to the grass overflow parking area located to the southeast. Special event visitors can then exit directly onto STH 106 at a second driveway.
- Public Roads - Once inside the park, public visitor-used roads will be limited to Silver Lane and the parking lot for 13 vehicles. Only authorized park and agricultural use vehicles will be authorized to go beyond the designated parking areas. When buildout for the learning center and/or dorm is completed, public roads and parking will be extended accordingly.

- Perimeter Path and Woods Trails – Only authorized vehicles will be able to travel on the mowed grass perimeter path, agricultural lanes and woods trails. Permits will be provided on a case by case basis for handicapped tours of the park, where appropriate.
- Agricultural Lanes – Authorized agricultural vehicles will be able to park in the small parking areas at the north shed. Within the agricultural fields, there will be a network of mowed, grassy lanes that will allow authorized vehicles to drive to the plots they are farming. These lanes will be narrow, yet allow for vehicles to pass a parked vehicle.

#### **D. PARKING**

Day use visitors to Silverwood will use the 13-vehicle, gravel parking lot east of the stone house, just off of the entry road. The size of the lot can be increased beyond 13, as needed. The parking area will begin as a grass overflow area. As staffing and budget resources allow, a gravel parking lot will be constructed. In the future the parking lot will be paved.

Because of the many visitors that will attend large special events, adequate overflow parking will be essential to the success of the park. In the near term, a four acre area east of the homestead will be seeded and be available for large events. Upon future development of the learning center and dorm, overflow parking will move to the southeast, as shown on the masterplan.

The future overflow parking will be a simple mowed grass field, planted in a mowable pasture mix. It will be able to accommodate up to about 530 cars. Provided that it is approved by the State and Town, there will be a secondary exit onto State Highway 106, allowing one-way traffic to exit out of the future overflow parking area.

On most days, the second exit will be used to provide entry and exit of equestrian trailer and tow vehicle parking. A gate and fencing could be used to contain equestrian parking to this designated two and one half acre area, just off of State Highway 106.

#### **E. EXISTING OUTBUILDINGS TO REMAIN**

All of the farm buildings except the white house will remain for now. This recommendation is based on the request of the FOSP, and their willingness to maintain, repair and provide visitor oversight of the farm buildings.

The outbuildings provide a glimpse of typical Wisconsin family farm that is becoming less common every year. It is due to the interest and commitment of the Friends of Silverwood that they will continue to be preserved.

The Friends have offered to raise the capital to repair and maintain these buildings. If the County deems they are being neglected or become a hazard to the public, will they need to be taken down.

- Bat House – As determined by the Wisconsin DNR, this building is a home for over 300 bats. In season, both little brown and big brown bats live here. With the help of the Wisconsin DNR, UW Madison and the US Forest Service, a study is being conducted to learn more about the bats at this location. Researchers are investigating the diet of bats that forage in agricultural and forested areas. What they learn can help to determine the impact that a fungal disease called “white-nose syndrome” will have in these areas. As of this writing, in early 2016, it has not been known to have infected the bat population at Silverwood, but it is expected to arrive within the next few years. The bat house is in generally good condition and is being kept for both ecological and educational purposes.

The bats that live here will be a benefit to the visitors and crops by providing protection against insects. According to research at State University of New York, little brown bats can consume up to 600 insects an hour.

Although the incidence of rabies is very low in local bat populations, an interpretive sign has been located at the bat house to ask people to avoid disturbing or handling bats that they may come across.

- Pig Barn – The pig barn is 45’ x 30’ and is in need of roof repair.
- Mesh Steel Corn Cribs – The ten, 15’ diameter, steel, meshcorn cribs have been used as an art installation by local artists. They have also been used in photos as an iconic representation of the park.
- 25’ x 60’ Wood Corn Crib – The wood corn crib is in need of roof repair.
- 8’ x 120’ Wood Corn Crib – The wood corn crib is in need of roof repair.
- Metal Sheds - The north and south metal sheds have been used by all partners at Silverwood. They are used for storage of farm equipment, tools, materials and the processing of produce that has recently been harvested. These buildings will not be used by the general public; they will be used by the growers. The buildings are in good condition. The County will be responsible for upkeep.

## **F. EXISTING BUILDING THAT HAS BEEN REMOVED**

- White House – The white house was in disrepair, it obstructed use of the proposed greatlawn, is was too small as a public meeting space and

would have been very costly to bring to public use standards. In addition, the foundation was so close to the existing well that it prevented improvements from being safely made to meet State code requirements. Consequently, the white house was demolished in January 2016.

#### **G. EXISTING BUILDINGS THAT COULD BE REMOVED**

- Garage – The garage is in a poor location on the edge of the greatlawn and east of the north metal shed, and is in such disrepair that it may need to be demolished.
- Utility (Pump) House – The utility house or pump house has been used to house a well and the electrical service panel. The electrical service panel is planned to be moved to the north metal shed. The well can not be brought up to State standards and planned to be abandoned. As a result, the utility house will no longer be needed. State health code will require filling in the associated well pit. Because the building walls will complicate the filling of the pit, adding to the cost, the utility house may need to be demolished.

#### **H. STONE HOUSE**

The Stone House was the residence of Irene Silverwood when she donated her property to the County. The precise year of construction remains unknown, despite the efforts of Julia Ince, Art History Lecturer in the Department of Art and Design, at University of Wisconsin, Whitewater. However, her research of tax records has shown that it probably dates back to at least 1855.

The Greek revival building has been recognized by the Town of Albion as a historically significant structure. The Town of Albion Stone House Historical Designation Letter is included in the Appendix to this plan.

Architectural plans that were generated by Dimension IV Design Group of Madison, WI have been approved by the State and construction has begun at the time of this writing. The existing Stone House has been altered to remove the second floor, because as a public space it would have been impractical to provide second story accessibility that would meet ADA code requirements. The stairway to the basement has been removed, to provide an open, unobstructed floorplan. Entry to the basement will be from the cellar door, on the north side of the building. An addition is being constructed where the former garage was located. The addition will have a lobby, storage room restrooms and a front and rear porch.

The Stone House is expected to be used as a visitor center and a public meeting space. It will also provide public restrooms. Other uses may be determined appropriate in the future as the FOSP and other users continue to use the space.

The FOSP will manage the building. They will determine when it is open for public use and be responsible for potential rental. The Friends will be responsible for basic maintenance, while Park staff will assist with larger maintenance issues related to the structure and mechanicals.

It is envisioned that the Stone House will be included in a larger Friends and County agreement, detailing roles and responsibilities for the park, agricultural education and the farm buildings.

## **I. PROPOSED ADDITIONAL BUILDINGS**

Many of the proposed additional buildings identified in this plan were recommended by the Friends of Silverwood Park and other partner organizations. They are not necessarily buildings that one would expect to encounter at a Dane County Park, but they appear consistent with the desired outcome of agricultural education at the park.

Prior to budgeting or developing detailed plans for any building, agreements will need to be reached with the Friends of Silverwood Park or other partner organizations regarding development cost, building maintenance, staffing, etc. While Dane County Parks supports the concept of these additional buildings, it does not currently have the capacity to be directly responsible for development and maintenance.

- Vault Toilet Building with Storage – The proposed vault toilet with storage may be approximately 22' x 13' and may have capacity for 2 men's and 2 women's toilets and a lockable storage area between the two restrooms. It may be located just off the proposed 13-vehicle visitor parking lot. The advantage of the vault toilet over a flush toilet is less cost, no heat requirement and it can be used year-round.
- Picnic Shelter – An open-air structure is that is approximately 40' x 60' is proposed. This size would accommodate 24 picnic tables, for a capacity of approximately 144 seated adults.
- Additional Metal Shed – Growing partners have indicated their need for additional space for storage and a produce processing space. The proposed additional metal shed could be approximately 40' x 70', making it the same size as the existing metal sheds and would be located just north of the existing north metal shed.

- Greenhouse - Growing partners have indicated their need for a



greenhouse. A 25' x 40' greenhouse is proposed to be located just east of the farmstead. It would have the preferred north to south

orientation for our northern latitude. Although 25' x 40' is a common size, future investigation may determine that a larger building would be needed. The location could accommodate expansion of the greenhouse.

- Learning Center - The proposed Learning Center is shown at 60' x 50' and is intended to accommodate upwards of 150 people. It would be located



just east of the farmstead, next to a parking lot for 15 vehicles and the adjacent dorm. The design shown here is conceptual in nature and may be very

different than shown. It is proposed that it would be used for agricultural educational purposes. Further investigation will be needed to determine the preferred size, design and capacity of a Learning Center.

- Dorm – The proposed dorm is shown at 90' x 80' on the plan graphic and is intended to have a capacity similar to the Learning Center, at 150 people. Visitors could stay overnight, it is believed that a single structure would be preferable to several smaller structures from a “management of youth” perspective. Further investigation will be needed to determine the preferred size, design and capacity of a dorm.

- Barn – The proposed barn is shown in plan at 60' x 40' and would be located northeast of the homestead. It would contribute greatly to the image of the agricultural park. Further investigation will be needed to determine the size and design of a barn. To accommodate changing needs, the barn should be constructed so that it can be expanded in the future.

## **J. FARM ANIMALS**

- Livestock – Although it may require greater commitment, all partners have indicated their support for livestock. A small number of livestock would be housed here; perhaps on the order of 4 or 5 cows. It is believed that livestock would contribute greatly to the appeal of the park.
- Chickens – Chickens are relatively easy animals to manage and may be enjoyable for visitors to see. They could be used for eggs and/or for their meat.
- Other Farm Animals – To add to the appeal of the park for visitors, other farm animals may include a goat and sheep.

## **K. ORCHARD**

An orchard may be desirable. A 1 acre orchard is shown slightly southeast of the farmstead. It is located on a slope to lessen the chance of frost damage and it is oriented mostly north to south for preferred sun orientation. Different growing methods would need to be explored, however recent trends call for planting in greater densities, with up to 800 trees per acre. An orchard would require a significant amount of labor. Future investigation is required.

## **L. EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES**

The equestrian community has expressed interest in there being facilities for equestrian use. The Masterplan calls for a separate, 2.5 acre parking area with a separate entrance off of State Highway 106. From here, riders will be able to access the system of trails that have been designated suitable for equestrian use. Typically, the equestrian trails should be less steep, with a reduced likelihood of erosion. The total length of these trails is about 4.3 miles. Besides a trailhead, kiosk and hitching post, a portable toilet could be located in this area. This equestrian parking and staging area will be available for increased parking capacity during special events. During these special events, visitors will be able to exit directly onto State Highway 106. The equestrian parking and staging area would not be available for equestrian use on the rare days that overflow parking was required.

## **M. TRANSITIONAL PLANTINGS**

Plantings can be used to transition from one type of vegetation to another. Located between the woods and cultivated agricultural area, the transition area may be flowering shrubs that bear fruit and nuts. Transitional areas may occur between other areas too, for example between pasture and prairie.

Because of the greater diversity of flora being introduced into the transitional zone, transitional areas can provide habitat for greater wildlife diversity. The park visitor's experience would be enhanced as they pass through these areas.

## **N. REMOTE FARM RUIN SITES**

The two remote farm ruin sites will be incorporated into destinations within the park. They may be used for historical interpretation and offer a glimpse of past agricultural use of the site. Interpretive signs can be provided to explain what was here and how these sites were used long ago. The existing silos may offer the opportunity for future lookout towers, but additional study is required. Further, cleanup of these sites will be necessary before they can become a destination for visitor use. Currently there are warning signs to stay out of the area for public safety purposes.

## **O. GREATLAWN AREA**

The greatlawn, located immediately north of the Stone House will provide an opportunity for flexible, large group gatherings and outdoor games. There is enough room here, where a 50' x 100' tent could be located to provide covered seating for special events.

## **P. PICNIC AREAS**

Scattered picnic tables could be located throughout the homestead area to provide for small group picnics. Although there are steeper areas of lawn to the south of the Stone House, there are some areas where picnic tables could be located under the shade of a large tree.

## **Q. AMPHITHEATER**

The proposed amphitheater is located about 600 feet, about a 2 minute walk, southeast of the proposed Learning Center/dorm area. It would have a capacity of about 150 visitors; suitable in size for an entire grade of Edgerton High School students. It could utilize the edge of the former quarry to provide the necessary slope for seating. The seating could be constructed out of lumber from the woods or perhaps quarried limestone. Further, investigation would be required to determine exact siting, final size and the method of construction.



## **R. LAKE ACCESS**

- From the Lake Access Site off of STH 106:

Primary water access to Sweet and Rice Lakes is planned to occur from the lake access site on STH 106 where a small gravel parking lot, gravel path and park kiosk have been constructed.

Sweet Lake Access - Improving the rustic launch may be beneficial, but the use should be targeted to small, non-motorized water craft vs large boats. Once in the water, signs to the north, along the shores of Sweet and Rice Lakes would indicate portaging opportunities from one lake to the other. Also, a handicap- accessible fishing pier is proposed near the parking lot.

- From the woods:

The Rice Lake shoreline in the woods is steep and not easily accessed. However, further investigation is recommended to determine the feasibility of providing pedestrian access to Rice Lake in the southwest corner of the woods, where the slopes are less steep.

## **S. GROUP CAMP**

Group camping is proposed in the area near the northern farm ruin site, with the intention to provide camping for agricultural education. As with group camps at other Dane County Parks, facilities would include a pit toilet, fire ring and picnic benches.

## **T. VEGETATIVE MANAGEMENT**

- Existing Woods

Totalling approximately 63 acres, the woods along Rice Lake is primarily an oak/hickory forest, however some cherry and maple can be found here as well. Oak species include bur, red, white and black.

Bur and white oak are primarily in the southern portion of the woods above the steeper eastern sections along Rice Lake. The same character continues into the more recently acquired woods of the Lake Access Addition, to the south. The northern portion of the woods that is lower in elevation, with wetter soils, has primarily red and black oaks. These can also be found in lower areas of the 15 Acre Addition.

There is little commercial value in harvesting the timber of these woods, as there are few trees that are both very large and straight.

*The “Vegetation of Wisconsin in the Mid-1800’s” (Finley 1976), which utilized original surveyors notes, indicates that an oak savannah was located on the land that is now Silverwood County Park. (See inventory graphic on Pre-Settlement Vegetation, Silverwood County Park in the appendix.)* Air photo imagery shows a much less dense wooded area in 1949. Hence, the age of the woods is relatively young. (See Historical Photos, 1949, 1968, 2010 graphic in the Appendix.)

The older, larger oaks, sometimes referred to as “wolf” trees, have their characteristic, wide-spreading crown that would have inhibited the growth of smaller trees under it when periodic fire was allowed to occur. These large oaks have little or no timber value, but are valuable for wildlife habitat. Since fires have been suppressed, invasive species have encroached upon the oaks. The shade from the encroaching, younger and lesser quality trees such as black cherry, box elder and poplar have caused lower limbs of the oaks to die. If clearing of the invasive species is not accomplished, the oaks are likely to continue to decline until they are lost.

There are some evergreen cedars found along the water’s edge where light is more able to penetrate. Also, invasive raspberry, honeysuckle and burning bush are found throughout as understory shrubs. There is the potential for some nice viewing locations if the invasive species were to be removed. Such viewing would be rewarding to visitors as they use the future trail system at Silverwood.

- Proposed Prairie/Oak Savannah Areas

Although there has been some discussion about creating a new woodlot habitat in certain areas of the park, this is not recommended because of the intensive management required to maintain a wooded area. A wooded area would likely be overrun by invasive, exotic species such as honeysuckle and buckthorn, as found in the woods along Rice Lake.

The restoration of the approximately 93 acres of the park, as indicated on the Masterplan map, to oak savanna would provide a manageable and attractive landscape. An oak savannah could be maintained through periodic, prescribed burns. The prairie would enhance agricultural activities by providing a habitat for pollinating bees, butterflies and birds. In addition, the prairie would significantly help prevent soil erosion.

Iowa State University researchers and others have shown that prairie strips can produce many benefits due to the prairie plants deep root systems. Among these benefits is greatly reducing sediment movement, phosphorous loss and nitrogen loss.

- Proposed Agricultural Areas

As called out in the Friends of Silverwood Mission and Vision Statements, agricultural education, agricultural innovation and agricultural production promise to make this a unique venture for the County park system. The areas with less than 6% slopes at Silverwood typically have the best soils. Consequently, these areas, totaling about 90 acres, have been selected for agricultural activities.

The agricultural areas that are further away from the central homestead area would be less likely to be irrigated, due to cost considerations. Therefore, drought tolerant species may need to be selected, unless the loss of crops due to possible drought is determined to be acceptable. Crops that may be suitable to these areas may include wheat, alfalfa and small grains. Vegetable and garden production will need to be planted where irrigation is present.

At the time of writing, it has not been determined whether the agricultural areas will be organic or conventional. It is possible that some agricultural areas would be operated organically or use organic methods, while other areas would use conventional farming techniques.

- Proposed Permaculture Areas

Permaculture is the application of methods that recognize the potential to create natural food producing ecosystems in the landscape. The term is a contraction from the words *permanent and agriculture*. It is permanent in that the plantings will sustain themselves with minimal effort because the plants are matched to the location they are sited. Permaculture promotes recognizing the characteristics of plants that can thrive in harmony with the existing site conditions, thus promoting sustainable habitats. Although the goal for the entire park is to work in harmony with the land, areas that are more challenging and particularly unique would likely benefit the most from a permaculture approach.

The Friends of Silverwood have expressed the desire to utilize the concepts of permaculture in certain areas of the park for food production.

The locations that have been suggested for application of permaculture methods include the three land depressions, or kettles, that are north and west of the homestead. These areas total approximately 6 acres. Also, the 9 acre lowland area along the north edge of the park and west of the group camping area may be planted using the methods of permaculture.

## **U. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

Dane County is currently drafting a lease agreement between the County and the Friends of Silverwood. When completed, the agreement will outline the responsibilities of the Friends to manage the agricultural components, including subleases to other growing partners of the park. Dane County will continue to manage the recreational and natural resource aspects of the park, as they do with other County parks.

## **V. FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Over time, there will be a better understanding of how the agricultural component of the park will develop. The Friends of Silverwood will need time to become aware of how the land can be used for agricultural education. They may determine that demand exceeds available land, or that demand warrants a more limited amount of acreage for agricultural education. Furthermore, the Friends will need time to try different crops and methods, like permaculture, to optimize suitability and success. Dane County Parks intends to work with the Friends to make land available for agricultural use as need is demonstrated.

Similarly for the recreational component, Dane County Parks will gain a better understanding of the needs and capabilities of the park and adapt facilities accordingly.

## **X. PROGRAMMING VISION**

- **Recreational Programming Vision**

Silverwood County Park will become a regular destination for park users seeking solitude and passive recreation activities, as well as more intensive agricultural education activities. Primary public water access will occur at the lake access site off of State Highway 106, while trailheads for hiking, snowshoeing and horseback riding will occur at the main park site off of Silver Lane. Kiosks will direct visitors at both the lake access site and the farmstead site. Interpretive signage may be provided where there are points of interest to explain past uses of buildings, natural features, restoration of savanna habitat, glacial history, wildlife watching opportunities and ongoing agricultural operations.

- **Agricultural Programming Vision**

With the help of the Friends of Silverwood, Edgerton School District and Operation Fresh Start, as well as future participants in agricultural

activities, Silverwood County Park can offer a unique opportunity for people to learn about innovative farming methods.

The Friends have indicated an interest in many different potential topics of agricultural programming. Agricultural programming may include the following: permaculture, beekeeping, mushroom farming, soil science, viticulture, animal husbandry, conservation, food processing, phenology, using a greenhouse for extended season planting and trellising.

The Friends have also indicated that they would like to establish communal gathering areas in and around garden produce areas for visitors to discuss farming practices.

Future acreage will depend on the amount of partnership that occurs. Growth will need to be flexible, depending on agricultural partner needs, ability and resources.

- Educational Programming Vision

Agricultural education is at the heart of what will make this a unique County Park. The FOSP as well as the other participating groups are expected to promote agricultural education and related activities with the cooperation of Dane County Parks.

Potential educational programming topics may include soil science, etymology, forestry, water quality, ornithology, history, archeology, art, writing, crafts, health and wellness.

## **XI. FUTURE BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS**

Dane County Parks only acquires land from willing land owners. Additional properties within the project boundary that provide shoreline access, water quality and habitat buffer zones, and/or connectivity to existing public lands should be considered short term goals. Land acquisition is more often based on an opportunity than identified priorities, therefore any lands available within the project area should be considered on a case by case basis. (Refer to the Boundary Adjustment Map in the Appendix.)

## **XII. ACTION PLAN/PHASING OF DEVELOPMENT**

The action plan identifies major capital park improvements and planning projects that may be carried out in the future. Development is dependent on a number of factors, including future funding, staff involvement and growth of the park. Items are prioritized as “current”, “pending” and “future”.

All estimated costs that follow are general and should be revised after detailed plans and specifications are completed for each project. Actual costs would need to be determined prior to development and an implementation schedule would depend on when funding becomes available.

Additional detailed construction drawings and planning would still need to be completed for many of the recommendations found within this plan. The estimated cost in this table is intended for rough planning purposes only.

As the park's agricultural education and recreation use continues to grow over the next 10-15 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to reflect future educational needs, new recreation trends and natural resource preservation needs.

<b>TASK</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>PROJECT SCOPE</b>	<b>COMMENTS/ EST. COST</b>
Restoration of 93 acres to Oak Savanna	Pending and Future	Friends of Silverwood, Contracted	Gradual establishment as ag lands convert to Savanna	\$500,000
Establish permaculture	Pending and Future	Friends of Silverwood	Est 6 ac. Gradual establishment as ag lands convert to permaculture	\$12,000
Establish 90 acres of agriculture	Pending and Future	Friends of Silverwood	Gradual conversion from rental land/row crop as need occurs	Dependent on type of crops
Construct trails in woods and around homestead	Current	DCP and Contracted	Most of clearing complete, stump grinding, seeding and mulching	\$12,000
Repave Silver Lane and extend road into Silver Lane	Current	DCP	Remove and replace existing asphalt portion, realign and extend in homestead area	\$108,000
Construct ADA accessible path from parking lot to Stone House	Current	Contracted	5' wide x approx. 300' length asphalt path	\$4,000
Construct visitor parking lot	Current	Contracted	13 car asphalt lot, planning, permits, 3 sided kiosk	\$28,000
Remodel Stone House	Current	DCP	OFS	\$130,000 plus OFS labor
Construct Vault Toilet and Storage Building	Pending	Contracted	Pre-engineered	\$90,000
Construct Additional Metal Shed	Future	Contracted	Similar to existing 40' x 70' North Shed	\$800,000

<b>TASK</b>	<b>PRIORITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>PROJECT SCOPE</b>	<b>COMMENTS/ EST. COST</b>
Construct Greenhouse	Future	Contracted	25' x 40' N to S Orientation, capable of extending	\$50,000
Construct Learning Center	Future	Contracted	50'x 60', Will require additional planning with Friends	\$1,400,000
Construct Dorm	Future	Contracted	90' x 80', Will require additional planning with Friends	\$2,000,000
Construct Parking Lot for 15 vehicles	Future	Contracted	15 car asphalt lot, planning, permits	\$32,000
Construct Sculpture Garden	Future	Volunteers	Grading, seeding and installation of sculpture. Donation for Art Installation Design to be possibly through competition.	\$2,000
Construct Driveway with Additional Parking for Learning Center	Future	Contracted	Asphalted, Engineering documents required. Stormwater plan req'd.	\$80,000
Construct Barn 60' x 40'	Future	Contracted	Will require additional planning with Friends	\$160,000
Orchard Planting	Future	Volunteers	Will require additional planning with Friends	\$8,000
Construct Equestrian Facilities	Immediate	Volunteers	Gravel parking, hitching post and pit toilet	\$45,000
Renovate/adapt silos at Farm Ruin Sites	Future	DCP/Volunteers	Spiral Stairs in silo to provide a lookout	\$8,000
Construct Amphitheater	Future	DCP/Contracted	Able to seat about 140 (ESD class size)	\$40,000
Construct Group Camp	Pending	DCP	Pit toilet, fire ring and picnic benches	\$4,000
Construct small boat launch	Immediate	DCP	Concrete ramp. Permit required.	\$4,000
Develop access to Rice Lk from woods	Future	DCP/Volunteers	Will require additional planning	\$10,000
Develop portage sites in Rice and Sweet Lakes	Immediate	DCP/Volunteers	Signs. Permit required. Shoreline protection required. (path between is mostly ok.)	\$6,000

### **XIII. SUMMARY**

Silverwood County Park offers a unique opportunity for Dane County Parks to offer agricultural education, along with the recreational resources that have more typically been found in our county parks. It will take many years for the park to reach its full buildout of facilities. Until then, a gradual phasing is anticipated, that gradually implements the facilities and capabilities outlined in this plan.

There has been great interest already from the community in Silverwood. Even before the master planning process had begun, the partners had been actively pursuing their interest in farming and the outdoors. Because of this activity, the partners have had a significant influence on the master planning effort. The decision of the Friends of Silverwood to stabilize and maintain the outbuildings is one example of this.

At the time of this writing, the historic stone house is being improved by constructing a new addition and remodeling the existing building. Soon it will be available for public meetings and provide public restrooms for special events.

Public lake access from the additional area off of State Highway 106, has already helped to fill what has been identified as one of the greatest recreational needs for this part of the county.

This master plan is meant to serve as a guide for future acquisition and orderly improvements to the park and natural resource area. Additional detailed construction drawings and planning will still need to be prepared for many of the recommendations found within this plan. As the park and recreation use continue to grow over the next 10 to 15 years, the plan should be revisited and amended as necessary to address changing stewardship needs and current recreation trends.

Silverwood County Park will pose a challenge to find balance between the agricultural and recreational components. Furthermore, because the agricultural component is something that the County has little experience in providing, there is the promise of real growing pains. However, after the Parks Department and the partners work through these challenges, the residents of Dane County will be the beneficiaries of what promises to be a great park, providing educational opportunities unlike any other Dane County park, while providing access to a wonderful natural environment of woods and water.



## **ATTACHMENTS:**

### **Park Master Plan Maps**

- **Preferred Alternative Master Plan**
- **Preferred Alternative Master Plan, Farmstead Area**

## **APPENDIX**

**A. Resolution 96, 2001-2002 - County Resolution Accepting A donation of Land With a Life Estate From Irene Silverwood, Town of Albion**

**B. Survey of Rice Lake, Dane County, Wisconsin**

**C. Stone House Historical Designation Letter**

**D. Inventory and Analysis Maps**

- **Existing Buildings**
- **Topography**
- **Soils**
- **Natural Resources, Whole Park**
- **Natural Resources, Woods**
- **Existing Uses and Public Access**
- **Pre-Settlement Vegetation**
- **Historical Air Photos, 1949, 1968, 2010**
- **Inventory and Analysis Summary**

**E. Boundary Adjustment Map**