

WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK RECREATION USE PLAN

In advance of the 100th anniversary of Iowa state parks in 2020, the Department of Natural Resources is developing plans for future recreation opportunities that are compatible with the resources of each state park.

WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK - A BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Wapsipinicon is one of Iowa’s oldest state parks. In 1921, 168 acres of beautiful wooded limestone and sandstone bluff land along the Wapsipinicon River, with unique geological features such as Horse Thief and Ice Caves, and a rich history extending hundreds of years into the past was offered to the Board of Conservation by a committee of the nearby Anamosa community. The offer was quickly accepted since the area fully met the Board’s criteria for a potential Iowa state park. In that era, primary Board emphasis was placed on public acquisition of significant tracts to ensure their preservation. Formal outdoor recreation facilities were typically few. Wapsipinicon was one of the exceptions.

Using inmate labor from the Anamosa State Reformatory, a stone swimming pool, park entry structures, roads, scenic stone bridges, as well as a golf course and club house building were constructed. The golf course remains in operation, the only one within the Iowa State Park System. Later decades saw the addition of a modern campground and the Boy Scout Lodge, trails, boat ramp, picnic shelters, and playground – the latter improved and enlarged using locally donated funds. In 1990, 140 acres were added to the park, providing opportunities for anglers as well as hunters. It is the site also of the Rotary Lodge built in 1995 with local funding and assistance. Finally, the Anamosa community also assisted in the 2006 relocation of the historic 1870’s Hale Bridge to the park, brought in dramatic fashion by Iowa National Guard helicopters. In 2014, Wapsipinicon State Park was honored by National Park Service designation as a National Historic District, a singular honor.

The Wapsipinicon State Park Recreation Use Plan will provide guidance for the park’s future in recognition of how important it is for not only the recreational opportunities it provides, but also for its unique and fragile natural and cultural resources which were the reason why it became one of Iowa’s first state parks.

Existing Facilities	Quantity	Existing Facilities	Quantity
Hale Bridge	1	Restrooms	
Day-Use Lodge	2	Seasonal (Flush)	2
Shelters	3	Year-round	2
Playground	1	Campground	
Boat Ramp	2	Total Sites	26
		Non-Electric	11
		Electric	14
		Youth Group	1

Table (above): Wapsipinicon State Park’s Existing Facilities

A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE OF WAPSIPINICON STATE PARK

GOAL –

Enhance visitor outdoor recreation and education experiences by upgrading facilities and trails at Wapsipinicon State Park. This will help to: promote visitor mental and physical health, enjoyment, and wellbeing; encourage family time and memory making; expand the availability of accessible facilities; protect natural resources for the future; and, generate economic activity in the region.

OBJECTIVES –

SAFE ROADWAY CIRCULATION BETWEEN BLUFF LAND AND RIVER

ISSUE:

- The existing road is extremely narrow for 2-way traffic. Widening of the roadway is made impossible due to the limited distance between the bluff slope and river.

PROPOSAL:

- Make main park roadway one-way during peak recreation use season, with the exception of entrance to campground, which would remain two-way year-round. Off season winter vehicular circulation would return to two-way traffic on river roadway to Rotary Lodge.

HALE BRIDGE - CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE HALE BRIDGE AREA AS A FOCAL POINT OF THE PARK:

ISSUE:

- The area near the Hale Bridge is a popular spot in the park for gathering and taking photographs, yet lacks basic visitor accommodations.

PROPOSAL:

- Add modern picnic shelter, year-round restroom and additional parking.

CAMPGROUND - ENHANCE THE CAMPGROUND TO IMPROVE THE USER EXPERIENCE:

ISSUE:

- The campground layout is antiquated with small, closely spaced campsites and tight roadway turns.
- Lodge conflicts with campground.

PROPOSALS:

- Reconfigure campground to enlarge campsites, resulting in fewer campsites, and improving the turning radiuses for large vehicles.
- Convert electric campsites to 50 AMP and provide full hook-ups where possible and affordable.
- Remove Boy Scout lodge -- repurpose.

DUTCH CREEK PICNIC AREA - IMPROVE THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF DUTCH CREEK PICNIC AREA:

ISSUE:

- Little-used picnic area, should not invest funds to maintain.

PROPOSAL:

- Remove the existing shelter and year-round restroom and restore the area to a more natural state.

ROTARY LODGE - IMPROVE THE ROTARY LODGE AREA:

ISSUE:

- The lodge area underutilizes the scenic views of the river valley and historic Hale Bridge.

PROPOSAL:

- Add more outdoor seating by creating a permanent rental tent pad outside the lodge to accommodate larger groups and maximize the enjoyment of scenic views by incorporating an outdoor fire pit and stone seating into the landscape for extended enjoyment.



Image (above): Historic Hale Bridge

HISTORIC STRUCTURES - MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF THE PARK'S HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Built in the 1920s and 1930s by the Board of Conservation and Anamosa State Reformatory, these structures are a legacy to be treasured and enrich the park visitor experience.

ISSUE:

- Historically significant structures and trails require ongoing maintenance and periodic restoration efforts to preserve their integrity.

PROPOSALS:

- Restore historic sign, entrance portal and two stone bridges.
- Continually monitor historic structures to identify necessary restoration efforts such as log rot replacement and tuck pointing. the Hale Bridge picnic area.



Image (above): Proposed new "Design Guide" picnic shelter

PARK ORIENTATION AND INTERPRETATION - INCREASE WAY-FINDING AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES PARK-WIDE

ISSUE:

- In a park filled with natural and cultural resources, there are prime locations where signage would provide interpretive and educative opportunities.

PROPOSAL:

- Add 2 four-sided interpretive kiosks to promote educational opportunities and provide park orientation and trail/facility information at the Hale Bridge picnic area, playground, and Rotary Lodge.
- Add double sided interpretive panel at the Hale Bridge picnic area.

RECREATION USE PLAN

Implementation of the Wapsipinicon Recreation Use Plan will help ensure that this classic Iowa state park remains a premier outdoor destination in the future. The draft plan was prepared with the input of park staff and will have review and input of current proposed park improvements from park visitors/regional stakeholders. It will be a detailed and practical blueprint for future action. All improvements will be completed with due regard for Wapsipinicon State Park's unique natural resources and great scenic qualities.

The completion of a recreation use plan for each park will help determine the most effective allocation of funds on a project-by-project basis for the Iowa state park system as a whole. Wapsipinicon's plan recommendations will be accomplished as necessary funding becomes available from ongoing sources as well as through partnering opportunities which may arise.

High Priority (1)	Cost Estimate
Shelter - Hale Bridge	\$100,000
Restroom (year-round) - Hale Bridge	\$100,000
Interpretive Sign - Hale Bridge	\$9,000
Additional parking - Hale Bridge	TBD
High Priority Total:	\$TBD
Medium Priority (2)	
Replace Shower Building - Campground	\$300,000
Restore Historic Entrance Sign, Portal and (2) Stone Bridges	\$320,000
Create Kayaking Course in the Wapsipinicon River	TBD
Medium Priority Total:	\$TBD
Low Priority (3)	
Redesign Campground Layout - Campground	TBD
Upgrade and enlarge 20 sites and add full hook-up to 1/3 of sites	\$150,000
Remove wooden restroom (year-round) - Campground	\$10,000
Relocate and repurpose Boy Scout Lodge - Campground	\$288,000
Replace and Relocate Park Office and Shop - Office/Shop	\$110,000
Add New Equipment Storage Building - Office/Shop	\$510,000
Add 1 Interpretive Kiosk - Picnic Area	\$30,000
Add Additional Parking - Picnic Area	TBD
Remove existing shelter - Dutch Creek	\$10,000
Remove Restroom - Dutch Creek	\$10,000
Add Permanent Rental Tent Pad - Rotary Lodge	TBD
Add Stone Seating and Fire Pit - Rotary Lodge	TBD
Low Priority Total:	\$TBD

Table (above): Wapsipinicon State Park Project Priorities



Image (above): Stone bridge at Wapsipinicon State Park

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WAPSIPINICON

