

Welcome to the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area

We are pleased that you have decided to visit, and to see for yourself the initial results of over a decade of collaborative effort by private citizens of Wisconsin, historical, conservation and environmental organizations, local, state, federal and tribal agency staff and elected officials. There is much to learn about this historic landscape, which has deep ecological significance and profound cultural meaning for the people of Wisconsin. The historic Sauk Prairie covered over 14,000 acres of the vast outwash plain of the Wisconsin glacier, from the ancient Baraboo Range on the north to the sand barrens of the Lower Wisconsin River valley. The Badger/Sauk Prairie property today occupies approximately 7,300 acres of that historic landscape.

For thousands of years a wide variety of native plants and animals called the Sauk Prairie home, as did successive populations of Sauk-Fox and Ho-Chunk people. Evidence of those populations along the Wisconsin River was described by European explorers Marquette, Joliet, and Carver in the 17th and 18th centuries. Following the removal of Native Americans in the 1830's, European immigrant families settled on the Sauk Prairie, and built a durable and prosperous farming community.

In 1942, at the beginning of the Second World War, the federal government took possession of nearly 10,000 acres of the Sauk Prairie north of the village of Prairie du Sac to build what would become the largest military munitions plant in the world. More than 80 farm families were forced to abandon their homes and land within a few months time. The



Badger Ordnance Works, later called the Badger Army Ammunition Plant, manufactured smokeless gunpowder and rocket propellant to serve the U.S. military through World War II, the

Korean conflict and the Vietnam War. At the height of its activity, Badger employed over 10,000 people, and remained a major employment center for Sauk County for decades. One remaining impact of years of munitions production and related on-site waste disposal practices is groundwater contamination. The U.S. Army has an ongoing groundwater remediation and monitoring program under the supervision of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to meet federal and state groundwater quality standards

The Badger plant ceased operation in 1975, and the U.S. Army declared the facility excess to its needs in 1997. The federal government, through its real estate and property arm, the U.S. General Services Agency (GSA), initiated a process to dispose of the Badger property. A contentious debate over Badger's future ensued, with calls to reestablish an industrial manufacturing center competing with pleas to return the land to its original inhabitants and owners.



In 2000, Sauk County obtained a federal grant enabling it to organize a reuse planning process. The Badger Reuse Committee (BRC), composed of twenty-one representatives of local landowners, businesses, non-profit organizations, and units of government, along with state, federal, and tribal agency staff (including potential future owners the DNR and the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center and Ho-Chunk Nation), began a series of facilitated public meetings to develop a vision for the future of the Badger lands. The *Badger Reuse Plan* was completed in March of 2001, and approved by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors. As is noted in the DNR's current *Regional and Property Analysis: The Sauk Prairie Recreation Area*, "the results of the BRC's deliberations are documented in the *Badger Army Ammunition Plant Reuse Plan*" which "defined nine key values to guide consideration of future uses. The committee's final reuse plan was agreed to by all parties and serves as the primary guidance document for future use planning and property management."

The *Reuse Plan* called for the creation of an "oversight and management board that will be representative of the Badger property's future owners/managers and local stakeholders, to oversee implementation of a reuse plan that is consistent with the values and criteria."

The Badger Oversight Management Commission was created in 2005 to provide that oversight. It has been meeting regularly since then for that purpose.

Members of the Commission include the DNR, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Sauk County, the local Towns of Merrimac and Sumpter, Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger, Badger History Group, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, UW-Baraboo, City of Baraboo, Sauk Prairie School District, Village of Sauk City, and Bluffview Sanitary District, and liaison members USDA and the Army.

The long process of planning for future uses continues with the DNR's master planning for the 3,800 acres of DNR-managed lands. After compiling information gathered by DNR staff, local organizations, Army personnel, academic researchers and local citizens, the department has published its "*Regional and Property Analysis*" describing the site's regional context, critical biological and ecological significance, and potential for a variety of future uses.

Sturdy threads of American history run through these lands, weaving stories that should be told. We hope that as you view the land itself, you can imagine its future in the long continuum of time and place, and then hope you choose to join us in taking the next steps to secure its priceless value for all to share, forever. In collaboration with the other members of the Badger Oversight Management Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources welcomes you to enjoy the Sauk Prairie as it is now, to learn about its history, and to consider how it can best be cared for and appreciated in the future.



The Nine Values of the Badger Reuse Plan (see the full plan at www.co.sauk.wi.us)

1. The Badger property is managed as a single unit (with additional stipulations)
2. The U.S. Army and/or the federal government complete the highest quality cleanup of the Badger property's contaminated land, water, building, and infrastructure in a timely manner.
3. Buildings and infrastructure needed to support cleanup activities and other approved uses are maintained.
4. Uses and activities at the Badger property contribute to the reconciliation and resolution of past conflicts involving the loss and contamination of the natural environment, the displacement of Native Americans and Euro-American farmers, and the effects of war.
5. Educational, research, and recreational opportunities afforded by the Badger property's unique natural, agricultural, historical, and cultural resources are developed and made available to the public.
6. Compatible agricultural opportunities at the Badger property contribute to our community. Research involving sustainable agriculture, history, and the social and natural sciences continue to be an important activity at Badger.
7. Uses of the Badger property will protect and enhance the natural landscape, geological features, biological communities, plant and animal populations, and ecological processes of the property and surrounding properties.
8. The Badger property's open space is a valuable part of our community's current and future character. Our community's characteristic rural landscape of small towns, farms, and natural areas is preserved, and the conversion of the Badger property is inclusive and respectful of all the diverse residents of the area.
9. Uses and activities at the Badger property contribute to the area's economic stability and sustainability and have a positive impact on local municipalities.

Thank you to the following organizations for their help with the tour:

USDA-Dairy Forage Research Center
Ho-Chunk Nation
US Army
Badger History Group
Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance
Badger Oversight Management Commission

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