

Wisconsin Natural Resources Board
C/o Laurie Ross, Board Liaison
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 7921
Madison WI 53707-7921

December 8, 2016

To the members of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR):

We the undersigned write in regard to the proposed master plan of the WDNR for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area (SPSRA) in Sauk County. As you know, the SPSRA occupies a significant portion of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, established at the outset of World War II by the U.S. government. The Badger lands also include properties held by the Ho-Chunk Nation, the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center, and the Bluffview Sanitary District.

We write to you as members of the Badger Reuse Committee, the diverse 21-member stakeholder group established in 2000 to tackle the complex challenge of charting the future of the Badger Plant (which the U.S. Department of Defense declared excess in 1997). **The committee included three representatives of the State of Wisconsin.** Many were skeptical that the committee could overcome the troubled history of the Badger lands and find consensus among the many interests competing over its future management and uses. However, we succeeded. After a nine-month, intensive, fully public, and professionally-facilitated process of discussion, negotiation, and compromise, we signed our names to the final report of the committee in March 2001 (the "[Badger Reuse Plan](#)"). The report provided a blueprint for the future of the Badger lands that reflected our shared values and a coherent vision.

In the fifteen years since, the reuse process has progressed fitfully but steadily. **Adoption of the reuse plan was essential in allowing the transfer of Badger lands to the current landowners to go forward.** The subsequent land transfer agreements, including that by which the State of Wisconsin received the lands now included in the SPSRA, embodied the values, principles, and goals of the reuse plan. The Badger Reuse Committee's vision for the Badger lands—to integrate in creative and mutually enhancing ways a mix of agriculture, ecological restoration, recreation, education and research—has taken hold in the planning and management of the Badger lands.

WDNR was able to receive 3,400 acres of land at Badger through the Federal Lands to Parks Program (FLP) via the National Park Service (NPS), based on the agency's application, which reflected the values and criteria established in the Badger Reuse Plan. In its application, WDNR informed NPS that it would develop only "low impact recreation" and offered several examples (hiking, picnicking, etc.).

Approval of a final master plan for the SPSRA is a critical step not only for the WDNR, but for the entire reuse process; for the WDNR's neighbors on the Badger lands; for local communities; and for all those in Sauk County and across the state who have worked for so long to provide this

opportunity. Having reviewed the proposed master plan, we wish to share with you these comments:

- We remain firmly committed to the vision that the Badger Reuse Committee laid out fifteen years ago; to the compromises and agreements that we reached together; and to the fair and inclusive process that allowed us to reach those agreements.
- We applaud the WDNR for building into its master plan much of what the Badger Reuse Committee envisioned, especially its emphasis on extensive prairie/savanna restoration, innovative land management, recreational opportunities, and the education potential of the Badger lands.
- We are, however, deeply concerned that the WDNR plan includes several recreational activities—off-road motorcycle use, model rocketry, year-round dog-training and dog-trialing, the potential for a long-range shooting range, and an exclusive 600-acre “Special Use” area—that run counter to the Badger Reuse Plan’s clear consensus to emphasize and include only *compatible, low-impact recreational opportunities*. Our concerns are based on the failure of the WDNR to acknowledge and communicate throughout its planning process the historic compromises worked out in the reuse process; the adverse impacts of these proposed activities on neighboring landowners (within and beyond the boundaries of the former Badger Plant); the failure of the WDNR to undertake adequate impact studies for proposed high-impact recreational activities; and the failure of the WDNR to acknowledge that public comments on its draft plans in September 2015 were overwhelmingly against high-impact recreation activities.

We further base our concerns on the specific language of the Badger Reuse Plan that the WDNR itself helped to develop and signed. Criterion 5.3 of the reuse plan states: “Recreational activities should focus on Badger’s natural and cultural features and values. **Activities should be low-impact in nature** and should be **compatible with other uses and overall management goals**. Efforts shall be made to accommodate **appropriate** recreational activities, but **these activities shall have no significant detrimental impacts on the cultural and natural features of the property.**” [Emphases added.] In proposing high-impact, incompatible, and detrimental recreational activities, the WDNR has broken its promises and undermined the community trust and relationships that we have built together over the last twenty years, through four state administrations.

We strongly appeal to you, as the WDNR’s independent oversight board, to withhold your approval of the master plan until changes are made to it that will bring it into full alignment with the vision, values, and criteria laid out in the Badger Reuse Plan.

RESPECTFULLY SIGNED AND SUBMITTED BY:

Darrell Bazzell (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Wisconsin DNR)

Marcia Colby (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the Sauk Prairie School District)

Tim Colby (representing the Town of Sumter; Delvin Peetz, deceased, served as a Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the Town of Sumter)

Gene Dalhoff (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Local Business/Tourism and Recreation)

Tom Gilbert (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service)

Brian Kindschi (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Local Landowners)

Kendell Lins & Laura Olah (Representing the Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger¹; Mr. Lins represented CSWAB as a Member of the Badger Reuse Committee)

Curt Meine (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie, now the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance)

Mike Mossman (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the Badger History Group)

Mayor Mike Palm (Representing the Baraboo Area; Dean Steinhorst, deceased, served as a member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing the Baraboo Area)

Milt Risgaard (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Local Business/Sauk County Development Corporation)

Betty Thiessen (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Local Landowners)

Bill Wenzel (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Sauk County)

Marcus Wenzel (Member of the Badger Reuse Committee, representing Surrounding Area)

Copies to:

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin
 U.S. Representative Mark Pocan
 Wisconsin State Sen. John Erpenbach
 Wisconsin State Rep. David Considine
 Ms. Elyse LaForest, U.S. National Park Service
 Mr. John Madden, U.S. National Park Service
 Mr. Randy Poelma, Ho-Chunk Nation
 Dr. Mark Boggess, USDA Dairy Forage Research Center

¹ CSWAB has a neutral position on dog trialing and training, consistent with CSWAB board actions and approvals.