

ORAP Gets Underway

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Director, Wisconsin Conservation Department

Wisconsin's outdoor recreation act program is setting aside land for public use at a record rate. Here's a progress report—briefly, how the program is set up and its major accomplishments the first seven months.

On March 30 the Wisconsin Conservation Commission approved purchase of approximately 5,500 acres of land which will cost a little over half a million dollars. No doubt this is a record for acquisition in a single monthly meeting.

Significant is the fact that this included 81 separate parcels in 33 projects. The high average price of almost \$100 per acre indicated that many of these lands were in the southeastern heavily-populated region and often were the last and most costly parcels on a number of high-priority projects. About 13 miles of frontage on lakes and streams were acquired for public access.

At present the Conservation Department is responsible for supervision and management of approximately 630,000 acres of state land. This figure includes property in the process of being purchased but does not include more than a million acres of public surface waters also under WCD management and protection.

There already are over 400 separate land-management projects with primary dedication to fish, game or forest and park uses, but all are operated under a multiple-use concept as far as possible. The continuous growth of this acquisition program is evident from the fact that six new projects totaling over 28,636 acres, with an estimated cost of about \$1,130,000, were approved for future action at the March Conservation Commission meeting.

This background is essential to an understanding of Wisconsin's new outdoor recreation act program and the progress made in its major goal of land control acquisition in the seven months since it started on September 1, 1961 to April 1, 1962.

For over a decade the Conservation Commission policy had been to purchase as much land as possible to meet the heavy outdoor recreational demands expected in the near future. The game management division especially had been aggressive in its attempt to preserve wetland areas which are "wildlife pockets" in intensively-farmed country. The fish management division recently had embarked on a 20-year waterway acquisition program to secure essential spawning grounds and public access to waters. Kettle Moraine state forest purchases were being made as rapidly as possible by the forests and parks division, and other projects were being completed.

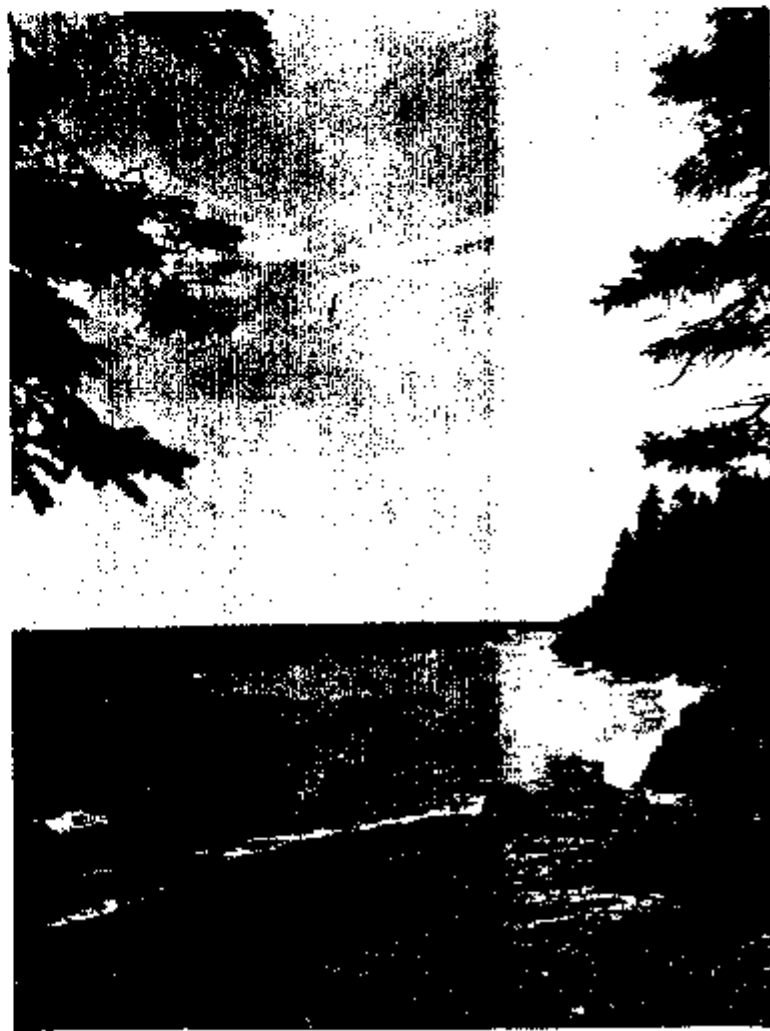
But these efforts were badly handicapped for lack of adequate funds. Then came the ORAP!

The 1961 Legislature will be remembered for its passage of Bill 616, A. which became Chapter 427 of the

Wisconsin Statutes. Although this was known as the "Governor's Bill" because it was conceived and strongly supported by the Executive Office, it became a bipartisan measure after several amendments and final passage 28-5 in the Senate and 86-5 in the Assembly. The Conservation Commission supported this bill for \$50 million over a 10-year period.

About 90 per cent of the money was to be assigned to the Conservation Department and the great majority of this was for land acquisition. In fact, the outdoor recreation act named 308 eligible projects in the first biennium and this since has been amended to add another.

The source of ORAP revenue is a 1-cent tax on each package of cigarettes. This has averaged about \$417,000





Fish habitat,
Grant County

per month, which is even beyond expectations. Future income should increase with greater population, and tourists also help pay the bill.

The printed outdoor recreation act is 12 pages long, and it is not possible to detail all aspects of it here. Some of the essential points include:

(1) A State Recreation Committee of five members plus the Governor (as chairman ex officio) was established. Each of the five represented agencies receiving funds under the act is as follows:

Director, Conservation Department L. P. Voigt
Chairman, State Highway Commission .. Harvey Grasse
Chairman, State Soil and Water

Conservation Committee Henry Ahlgren
Director, Department of Public
Welfare Wilbur Schmidt
Recreation Specialist, Department of
Resource Development Harold Jordahl

This is a coordinating group which meets as necessary to facilitate program action and solve problems. After the first biennium, it will play a key role in recommending project priorities to the next Legislature.

(2) Two vital new sections were added to the conser-

vation act (Sec. 23.09) authorizing the Conservation Commission to take conservation easements and rights in property and establishing a 50-50 state aid program for development of recreational facilities in county forests.

(3) Besides \$6,703,000 assigned to the conservation fund in the 1961-63 biennium for land control acquisition, \$1,983,000 also was made available to this fund for the following purposes:

\$1,000,000	Capital improvements in forests and parks
250,000	Maintenance in forests and parks
493,000	Replace money previously transferred to park use from the fish and game fund
140,000	Establishment of tourist information centers
100,000	State aid for county forest recreation areas

(4) Also in the first biennium, \$525,000 was given to the Department of Public Welfare for the establishment of two youth camps; \$302,000 to the Department of Resource Development for state aid in metropolitan park land acquisition and long-range planning; \$293,000 to the State Highway Commission for acquisition of scenic easements and waysides along the state highways; and \$90,000 to the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee for the creation of recreational pools in conjunction with southwestern Wisconsin's flood control struc-

tures. The Conservation Department is cooperating with each of these agencies.

Conservation Department personnel training began even before ORAP started when 26 men were sent to a special land acquisition training school at the University of Wisconsin. Later over 80 attended a Conservation Easement Workshop and Conference for training in this new program, and a special Easement Committee was formed.

Other personnel were transferred between divisions to help where more manpower was needed. Ralph Hovind, game management area supervisor, was loaned to the Department of Resource Development temporarily to assist in recreational planning. Walter E. Scott, administrative assistant to the director, was assigned as ORAP Coordinator between department divisions and other agencies. A large part of the time of all field personnel of the three land acquisition divisions went into that work after the new program started.

In cooperation with other state agencies, the Conservation Department is active as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE: Agreement executed for use of land on which a camp will be built on State House lake near Manitowish in Northern Highland state forest, Vilas county. Land also is being purchased for a similar camp at Interstate park in St. Croix county. Each of these two camps will run two six-week periods with 100 boys per period this summer and the Conservation Department will furnish the work program for them on conservation projects. A third camp is planned for the Kettle Moraine state forest in the next biennium.

STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION: As the WCD also is taking scenic easements along roads and especially near and in its own projects, this program is coordinated continuously with the Highway Commission which at times may even acquire rights in land for later transfer to WCD control.

STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE: Recreational use is the primary reason for the small lakes to be created in southwestern Wisconsin.



