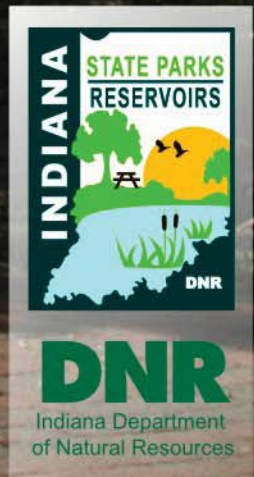


Pokagon State Park Interpretive Master Plan 2008



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Introduction

In response to a need to stay current with interpretive and visitor trends and to maximize limited staff and financial resources, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Parks and Reservoirs has developed this Interpretive Master Plan for Pokagon State Park. The plan accomplishes this task by:

- a. focusing interpretive efforts on a site-specific theme
- b. identifying needs for guided and self-guided interpretation, and
- c. recommending actions to fill those needs.

The process of developing interpretive recommendations considers three components:

- a. Resource. What are the natural and cultural resources of the site?
- b. Visitor. Who are the current users? What are the untapped audiences?
- c. Agency. What is the mission of the agency? What are the management goals within the agency?

Other regional interpretive experiences and partnerships are incorporated to stretch staff and finances, foster cooperation and prevent competition.

Several factors make the plan important for Pokagon State Park:

- a. In 2016, Indiana State Parks will be celebrating its 100th birthday.
- b. The Pokagon Nature Center opened in the early 1980s. Many of the exhibits have been “loved to death” and need to be spruced up or replaced.
- c. Trends in visitor use have changed
 1. Standardized testing for schools, reductions in park staff and bus transportation costs have changed how school field trips are conducted and scheduled.
 2. Conference attendees at the Potawatomi Inn are tightly scheduled and unable to find time to participate in interpretive activities.
 3. Some traditional program attendance has declined due to fewer campers from years previous, and changes in staff availability.
 4. A public which is seemingly busier and presented with more options needs to be attracted with a continued variety of programs.

The intent of the plan is to serve as a long-term guide for interpretation at Pokagon State Park. The phased and prioritized recommendations are designed to further Pokagon in the near future and into the Division’s next 100 years.

Resource Overview

The following resource overview is general and related to the interpretive themes. For a more detailed resource overview, see the Pokagon Natural Resources Management Plan, located at the Nature Center

I. Natural History

A. Geology

The geological story of Pokagon is rooted in the Ice Age. During the most recent glaciation (the Wisconsin), the Saginaw glacial lobe stagnated over the northeast corner of Indiana. It ceased its forward advance, melted and broke apart. Meltwater from the glacier deposited debris. Blocks of ice broke free and were buried. The result is a rolling topography that includes numerous kettle lakes and depressions formed by the melted ice blocks. Many other glacial features are found at Pokagon. Hell's Point is a kame, formed when meltwater carrying debris across the glacier's surface, deposited it in a cone-shaped hill. An esker forms a portion of Trail 6. Eskers are serpentine ridges of glacial deposits that accumulated in a tunnel under the ice. Large boulders, glacial erratics, dot the landscape. Moraines, rolling ridges of debris pushed by the glacier, create the topography of the park. This topography is best seen at Bluebird Hills where the absence of forest makes the contours visible.



B. Water

1. Lakes

Kettle lakes created by the Saginaw lobe dot the landscape. They range in size from Lake James, which forms the park's western and southern boundary to small Lake Lonidaw. The kettle lakes, even those small in size, can be surprisingly deep. The kettle lakes and depressions formed when blocks of ice broke from the glacier, were buried under insulating debris and slowly melted, leaving behind a water-filled depression.

The many lakes at Pokagon and surrounding region are features that makes Pokagon unique in Indiana. The lakes harbor wildlife and provide recreational opportunities not found abundantly in the state.



2. Wetlands

The abundant lakes and drainage permit a variety of wetland types including marshes, fens, shrub swamps, sedge meadows and wooded swamps. Wetlands form the periphery of Lake Lonidaw and portions of Lake James. Springs feed many of the wet areas. These habitats harbor associated plant and animal species.

C. Plant Communities

1. Historic records

A study of the 1831 survey records (found in the Pokagon Natural Resources Management Plan), indicates more open, sparsely wooded areas than are currently found. Savanna indicator species such as hazelnut were recorded in 1831. The average number of trees/acre was 72. In 2003, the average number of trees was 155 trees/acre. Composition also differed in density and diversity. Oaks of many species were more prevalent in 1831. Maples were absent.

2. Present Conditions

Today sugar and red maple are common trees in the park. Some oak species from the 1831 survey are no longer found. Wooded areas are more densely forested and savanna is largely absent.

3. Invasive Species

Of concern is the prevalence of invasive plant species at Pokagon. These include woody and herbaceous plants. Bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry and common privet are of great concern. Garlic mustard has been the ground cover in many of the wooded areas. Reed canary grass and some purple loosestrife are in the wetland areas. More aggressive approaches to managing invasive plants (burning, herbicides, cutting) are being implemented.

D. Fauna

1. Edge of Range Species

Pokagon's northern location, glacial topography, soils and drainage are reminiscent of northern ecosystems. In Indiana, these ecosystems are at the southernmost edge of their range. As a result, several animal species, found in the northern Great Lakes are present at Pokagon. Among those species are the star-nosed mole, massasauga rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle, veery and northern leopard frog. Sandhill cranes nest in the area. Regal fritillary and Mitchell's satyr are in the county.



2. Nuisance Species

Many species were historically present at the park, but the absence of predators has made their population unnaturally high. White-tailed deer and raccoon have been culled or trapped to bring down their populations. Increased Canada goose populations are of concern.

Other mammals such as beaver, coyote and fox are experiencing an increase that is presently sustainable.

Some animals, such as the mute swan, were not historically present. There is a concern that swans could hamper nesting attempts of sandhill cranes.

The emerald ash borer has devastated Michigan ashes and has been identified in Steuben County. Park management has instituted policies to prevent its introduction into the park.

II. Cultural History

A. Potawatomi

The park itself is named for Leopold and Simon Pokagon, father and son Potawatomi leaders who lived in northern Indiana and southern Michigan. Chief Simon Pokagon was born in 1830, in Michigan. He and his wife, Lonidaw, settled on a small lake typical of this region. Pokagon wrote several books documenting Potawatomi customs, legends and language.



Potawatomi were present at Lake James in the early 1800s and had settlements in Steuben County. Members of the Potawatomi reside within the region and maintain their customs and practices.

The Potawatomi kept the landscape open by regularly setting fires. Driving game, removing brush, maintaining visibility and allowing crops to thrive were among their reasons for burn-

ing. By the mid-1830s, the Potawatomi were being replaced by European settlers. Fires ceased, wet areas were drained and agriculture became the predominant land use.

B. Park History

Pokagon State Park was one of the system's earlier parks, dedicated in 1925, nine years after the State Park system was formed. The park and the Potawatomi Inn (built two years later) have provided a northern lake experience for generations of park visitors. Its location in the northern part of the state has made it a popular winter destination. Its proximity to Michigan, Ohio and major highways and placed it in a strategic location for gatherings of all kinds.

C. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Company 556 of the CCC was assigned to Pokagon State Park. In addition to many infrastructure and erosion control projects, the CCC built the classic structures found throughout the park. Works at the park include: main beach, inn beach, gatehouse, shelterhouses, Spring Shelter, the original County Road Bridge, group camp, trails, bridges, service building, toboggan slide, saddle barn, campgrounds and parking lots. The CCC's beautiful masonry using glacial erratics and timbers has lasted for decades. Because of the park's many CCC structures, 1004 acres of the park are on the National Register of Historic Areas. This designation requires structures be kept historically accurate and that any changes meet the approval of the Division of Historic Sites and Preservation.



D. Pokagon State Park Trine State Recreation Area

The recently acquired Trine SRA is 200 acres in size and is located east of I-69 and the park entrance. From 1948 until the early 1970s, the site was the Wing Haven Resort and had eleven buildings. In the early 1970s, it was sold to the Calvary Temple which ran it as a retreat and camp facility.

Wing Haven Resort was run by Helen and Ben Swenson, managers of the Potawatomi Inn in the 1930s and 1940s. When Helen Swenson sold the resort, she kept her home and 160 acres on the east side of the property. Upon her death, her property became an ACRES Nature Preserve. Acquiring the Trine property creates a large contiguous area of land protected by several agencies.

In addition to the camp facilities, the property includes a high quality fen. The property has a rich history, ecological significance and recreation potential. At present the property is not open to the public as buildings are being assessed for restoration or demolishing.



Existing Conditions

I. Audiences

A. Public.

The bulk of the interpretive programs are planned and scheduled for the general public. This would include those staying at the park (campgrounds and inn) as well as local residents. Typically the local residents are coming for a special event. A core group of local and regional residents are frequent visitors and come for the regularly scheduled programs.

B. Inn Conferences and Organizations

The Potawatomi Inn with its conference facilities hosts a number of venues that include the park interpretive staff. Among these are Elderhostels and the annual Great Lakes Park Training Institute. Other conferences may request an interpretive program during the evening or early morning.

Comments

The Inn is generally booked solidly with groups and organizations. Many of these are not taking advantage of interpretive programs and interpretive center.

C. School Groups

After public audiences, school groups provide the second largest group participating in interpretive activities. Many of the teachers have been coming for years. Some schools have a residential experience and stay at the park's group camp.

Comments

Although there are several loyal teachers, the number of new teacher participation is declining. Declining interest in park field trips and lack of knowledge about the outdoors are reasons expressed by teachers to the interpreter. Additionally, newer and older teachers are constantly under pressure to have students succeed in standard testing (ISTEP) and field trips need to be justified with school standards.

Homeschools are showing an increased interest in visits to Pokagon. Their schedule flexibility and transportation availability make a field trip logistically easier than it is for traditional schools.

Another group that is showing interest is pre-schoolers. Informal groups of parents are interested in having interpretive programs geared to that age group.

D. Groups

Scouts, church groups and others coming to the park request hikes, talks and badge-related programs. In 2006, these groups made up approximately 10% of program attendance.

E. Service Groups: VFW, Kiwanis, Lions

Organizations such as the VFW, Kiwanis and Lions Clubs request speakers at their luncheons and other events. Garden clubs and bird clubs also request a specific program related to their area of interest.

Comments

Off-property programs represent a small percentage of the overall programming. Keeping the Nature Center open with limited staff makes it difficult to schedule off-site programs.

II. Facilities for Interpretation

A. Nature Center

The hub of the interpretive service is the Nature Center. Its hexagonal exhibit room is matched with a basement designated for office, work and storage space. A second hexagonal addition contains a restroom and a program room with movable seating and A/V capabilities.



Exhibit Room

Visitors enter the exhibit area where they are typically greeted by a staff member or volunteer in the reception area. A circular traffic flow places live animal exhibits in the center and other exhibits around the periphery.

Basement

The basement is off-limits to the public and is equal in square footage to the exhibit room. The basement contains office space, work area and storage area.

Program Room

Audio-visual programs, talks, meetings and workshops are conducted in the program room. Seating is movable, providing adaptability. A low riser at the front of the room gives a speaker greater visibility.

The current equipment utilizing slides was put in place in 1991 when the building addition was completed. It was becoming outdated before it was used to its fullest potential. The LCD projector acquired in the late 1990s is also outdated. Slides need to be transferred into a digital format.

B. Nature Center Program Area

Near to the Nature Center is a small outdoor program area with benches. This is used for outdoor talks and activities when the weather is nice. Another area close to the building has picnic tables and a fire ring. It is used for the park patch program and other activities.

C. Potawatomi Inn

The Potawatomi Inn is a hotel and conference center located at the park. The facility includes hotel rooms, two restaurants, numerous meeting rooms, pool and informal lounges. The inn overlooks Lake James and has easy access to the trail system.

Programs

The Inn's proximity to trails and people makes it an ideal place to meet for interpretive hikes. Conference rooms provide space for programs with special groups such as Elderhostel.



D. Trail System

A trail system covers much of the park including new acquisitions. Trails are primarily loops and include destinations such as Hell's Point, Lake Lonidaw and the Spring Shelter. Trails travel through wetlands, forest, pines and old field habitats.

Meeting locations for most hikes are the Nature Center, Inn and Spring Shelter (located near the Campgrounds).

The system offers many options for trail length and are listed as Moderate or Easy. One paved loop trail originates at the Nature Center. Connecting trails allow access to adjacent protected land owned by the ACRES land trust.

A paved bike trail runs through the park connecting the front gate to the nature center and the campgrounds.

E. Spring Shelter

The Spring Shelter is a small building located within the campground area. It was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The building is open and has a fire place. An artesian well provides a constant flow of water.



Many hikes originate from the Spring Shelter, drawing on the campground users. It is also a destination for other hikes. The fireplace has been used to provide hot drinks for various programs.

F. Amphitheater

The amphitheater is located in the middle of the campgrounds. It is used primarily during summer holiday weekends for campfire programs.

G. Beach

A large public beach at the park offers program opportunities. “Beach break” programs as well as roving interpretation are conducted there.



H. Toboggan Warming Center

A building at the toboggan run serves as the payment area for the refrigerated toboggan run. It also includes a snack bar run by the inn, tables and fireplace. The lower level has a bulletin board containing current information. The building is operated only when the toboggan is running.

I. Trine Property

The recently acquired Trine Property is located across from the park on the east side of I-69. The nearly 200-acre property served for years as a resort and later as a church camp. The original Winghaven Resort was managed in the 1930s and 40s by former Potawatomi Inn managers Ben and Helen Swenson. Many of the original buildings remain in good condition. A fen and a lake are on the property.

This property is being rehabilitated and evaluated. Many of the recent buildings are not in good condition and will be demolished. The fen on the property will need restoration. Eventually, the buildings will be available for rent. Boats will be rented on the lake for fishing and paddling.

Interpretation will have a place at Trine Property and will be addressed in the Recommendations.

III. Staff

A. Interpretive Staff

As of this writing, staff includes:

One full-time interpreter

One 180-day seasonal interpreter

One 120-day seasonal interpreter

One 120-day receptionist

Comments

From 1986 to 1992, Pokagon had a second full-time interpreter. That person resigned in 1992 and the position was frozen until 1995 when it was completely eliminated. Park management has tried to overcome the staffing shortage by providing additional seasonal help, but the quality of providing programs is affected due to lack of continuity inherent in seasonal positions.

B. Volunteers

At this time there is no “Friends” group to provide volunteers and funding, however, several volunteers contribute time and expertise to the interpretive service. Tasks range from staffing the reception desk, maintaining biological inventories, scanning slides, leading programs and conducting service projects.

IV. Interpretative Programs

A. Traditional Park Programs

Hikes, talks and activities are scheduled for public attendance daily during the summer and on weekends the remainder of the year. The primary audience is people staying at the inn or campgrounds. Program topics focus on the natural and cultural themes of Pokagon. Hikes are led to destinations and focus on the ecology and geology of Pokagon. These types of programs are also offered for special groups (scouts, clubs, churches) who reserve in advance.

The former park patch program was updated in 2008 to the three-component, Hoosier Quest Programs. They represent the same idea of various tasks to fulfill requirements. They remain popular and can be very time consuming in the summer.

Comments

Overall, attendance to traditional programs has varied over the past decade. Leisure interests have shifted to less structured, scheduled experiences and electronics. Reduced staff at certain times of the year has reduced ability to provide programs at popular times, both school and public.

B. Special Events

Special events may last several hours to an entire weekend, with a theme or topic. Special events usually include several related activities for a variety of ages, interests and abilities. Some topics are interpretive (astronomy). Others are more recreational, such as the seaplane fly-in.

Many of the special events receive a large turn-out and are annual. The interpreter may be directly leading programs, serving as the organizer, or providing roving interpretation.

C. Roving Interpretation

Roving interpretation involves going to a particular site or high traffic area and providing interpretation as well as a presence.

The Pokagon interpretive service does a good job of maintaining a visible presence at the Nature Center reception desk. Although this visitor contact has never been quantified, it is in fact roving interpretation. Additionally, this reliable presence has been good for public relations between the park and the public.

D. School Programs

In 2006, schools provided 11% of the programs and 14% of the program attendance. School programs are generally developed to fit a teacher's curriculum needs. Spring and fall are the most popular times for school field trips.

Comments

The number of traditional school programs varies from year to year based on Nature Center staff available, needs of teachers, and transportation costs. Growing in popularity are home school and preschool groups.

E. Geocache Programs

Geocaching originated as an interest from a seasonal interpreter who is now in a permanent position at another park. The geocache themes are interpretive. The program became popular enough that it is now a state-wide program. Many geocaches are maintained at the park. Quantifying participation at the park level is difficult.

VI. Interpretive Media

A. Nature Center Exhibits

The exhibits at the Nature Center are a mixture of passive cases and interactive exhibits. Topics include natural and cultural history from the park. Most of the exhibits date to the early 1980s.

Moving counter-clockwise through the display area, changeable exhibits are followed by a large bird viewing window. Several passive exhibits cover fauna, astronomy, Potawatomi and the Civilian Conservation Corps. A touch table, bee exhibit and small kid's corner finish off the loop. The central exhibit contains aquariums with live animals and the reception desk.



B. Inn displays/mounts/fish tank

The park theme of Potawatomi and northwoods is carried through in the furnishings and interior. Several taxidermy mounts and a large fish tank display regional wildlife. Items are labeled, and many are interpreted.



C. Signs

Interpretive panels identify natural and cultural features at the park. Among them are: Lakes of Pokagon, Lake Lonidaw, Main Beach, Group Camp, Spring Shelter, Hell's Point, Potawatomi Inn, County Road Bridge and I-69. Additionally, a sign about the Civilian Conservation Corps is located at the Beach Shelter. Another sign at the site of the CCC camp site is mounted on a beautiful stone pedestal that demonstrates the CCC craftsmanship.

Partnerships

A. Pokagon State Park Nature Center Endowment Fund

A part of the local Community Foundation, this separate endowment has purchased spotting scopes, promotional prizes and program materials. An all-terrain wheelchair was purchased in part from this fund. The annual amount available varies.

B. Group Camp Endowment Fund

The Group Camp Endowment Fund was started by alumni of a boys camp that was conducted there for many years. The fund is managed by the Community Foundation. Monies are used for building rehab of the Group Camp. About \$4000 is in this fund.

C. Astronomical Society of Hillsdale County

This organization conducts public astronomy programs at the park. These programs are timed with astronomical events such as meteor showers. The group provides equipment and expertise.

D. Steuben County Tourism Bureau

The tourism bureau provides money for the Autumn Harvest Hoedown, a September square dancing event. They have also provided a touch screen at the Inn that provides local information.

E. Potawatomi Inn

The Inn pays for promotional materials, program schedules and radio programs that promote park activities.

Regional Offerings

A. Maple Wood Nature Center, LaGrange County Parks

Maple Wood Nature Center is approximately 20 miles from Pokagon. Their 90+ acres includes hiking trails through forest, swamp and wet prairie. A full-time interpreter offers programs, special events and a nature center. A large Maple Syrup Days program is conducted annually in March.

B. Allen County Parks

The park system holds roughly 1000 acres in four parks. Fox Island is the largest park with 650 acres, followed by Metea Park with 250 acres. Full and part-time interpretive staff conduct school programs and day camps. Allen County includes the City of Ft. Wayne and is about 30 miles south of Pokagon.

C. Ft. Wayne Parks

The City of Fort Wayne offers nature-related programs and special events at several of their parks. Fort Wayne is about 30 miles south of Pokagon.

D. ACRES Land Trust

ACRES operates in northeast Indiana and is based out of Fort Wayne. Originating in 1960, it is one of the oldest and most established land trusts in the state. Several of their preserves are located in Steuben County. Some of their preserves are adjacent to the park, thereby extending the protected boundary and buffer. ACRES offers programs and workdays at their preserves.

E. Blue Heron Ministries

Under the umbrella of the Presbyterian Church of Angola, Blue Heron Ministries acquires, restores and stewards natural areas. They offer an educational component.

F. Wood-Land-Lakes

The mission statement of Wood-Land-Lakes is: "Wood-Land Lakes is a not for profit 501(c)(3) organization, established in 1994 to address natural resource needs in DeKalb, Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben and Whitley counties, Indiana. We bring people together to identify needs and foster opportunities in the economic, environmental and social areas of northeast Indiana."

The organization addresses land protection, rural community protection, water quality and a host of other conservation issues. They disseminate information and host workshops. They are located in Angola, Indiana.

G. Angola Parks and Recreation

The small department does not conduct interpretive programs, but has some natural areas minutes from Pokagon State Park.

H. McClue Woods

This 80-acre preserve, located near Pokagon, contains some of the best old growth forest in northeastern Indiana. The property is under the auspices of the Steuben County Commissioners.

Interpretive Theme

Theme: *Pokagon's rich natural and cultural histories are unique to Indiana and offer a northern spirit to this popular, year-round, Midwest destination.*

Subthemes:

1. Glaciers from the north were responsible for the rolling hills and many lakes.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will understand conditions that created glaciers.
- B. Visitors will understand how the stagnation of the Saginaw lobe led to the park's many glacial features.
- C. Visitors will be able to identify Pokagon's glacial features including kames, eskers, and kettle lakes and explain their formation.

2. The lakes and associated habitats, are home to plants and animals found more commonly to the north.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will appreciate that the park is at the southern edge of range for many northern species.
- B. Visitors will be able to identify plants and animals rare to Indiana, but found in the northern Great Lakes region.

3. The Potawatomi Indians settled here from the north and were well-acquainted with the abundant natural resources.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will know some of the regional resources used by the Potawatomi for food, medicines, tools and shelters.
- B. Visitors will appreciate the Potawatomi's ability to co-exist with the resources.
- C. Visitors will appreciate the leadership, accomplishments and philosophy of Simon Pokagon.

4. The Civilian Conservation Corps utilized the local resources to build and restore the park and create a unique northern Indiana experience.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will know the historical context that led to the creation of the CCC.
- B. Visitors will see and appreciate the CCC's skilled craftsmanship using local stone, wood and sand.
- C. Visitors will understand Pokagon's CCC conservation and recreation legacy.

5. Pokagon restores and maintains natural habitats and cultural history unique to this northern region by active resource management.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will be able to visualize the pre-settlement region and the prevalent ecosystems.
- B. Visitors will be able to identify invasive and aggressive plant species that threaten Pokagon's ecosystems.
- C. Visitors will appreciate the planning, training and safety precautions required to manage Pokagon's resources.

6. With its combination of northern habitats and unique facilities, Pokagon has had a long history as a popular, year-round Midwest destination.

Objectives:

- A. Visitors will understand the changes between how earlier visitors recreated at Pokagon and the Trine SRA as compared with today.
- B. Visitors will appreciate the seasonal changes as they relate to recreation at Pokagon and the Trine SRA.

Recommendations

I. Interpretive Center Exhibits

A. General Comments

1. The Northwoods theme should be carried out in the choice of colors and exhibit materials.
2. Movement will go in a counter-clockwise fashion through the display room.
3. Various items throughout the exhibits can be labeled with their Potawatomi name.

B. Entry

A welcome and theme statement will be visible in the entry foyer along with images of the park's natural and cultural features.

C. Glaciers/Ice Age

Sub-theme: *Glaciers from the north were responsible for the prevalent lakes.*

Recommended Exhibits

1. *Glacial Formation and Extent.* Using text and diagrams, an exhibit explains how glaciers formed. This includes maps of glacial advances in N. America and in Indiana. One graphic will feature the stagnation of the two lobes over northeastern Indiana (Pokagon).
2. *Diorama of Glacial Feature Formation.* A 3-D exhibit features a look at the park thousands of years ago. It shows how glacial formations were created. These include kames, eskers, moraines and kettle lakes.
3. *What can you see today?* A photo exhibit on features today, especially hitting on kettle lakes. This will provide the segue into the next sub-theme.

D. Lakes and Habitats

Sub-theme: *The lakes and associated habitats, are home to plants and animals found more commonly to the north.*

Recommended Exhibits

1. *Woodland Window.* The woodland window takes up most of one wall. It could in effect be a display fitting into the habitat theme.

Historically, the pre-settlement vegetation of Pokagon was a mix of prairie, savannah and wetland. The sloped wall space below the window and beyond the railing could be used to introduce the three historic habitats and emphasize the current woodland habitat. The interpretation would be on frameless flat panels (to allow easy mop dusting).

2. *Lake Maps.* Bathymetric maps of the park lakes could be placed along the waist-high stairway wall.
3. *Live Animal Exhibits.* Behind visitors looking at the window are the live animal exhibits. Two of the tanks facing the window could tie to the wetland and prairie habitats. The tanks would incorporate aspects of those habitats in their backgrounds.
4. *Taxidermy Mounts.* Several mounts (such as the heron and badger) could be associated with their specific ecosystems through text and placement.

E. The Potawatomi

Sub-theme: *The Potawatomi settled here and were well-acquainted with the abundant natural resources*

Recommended Exhibits

1. *The Potawatomi and Simon Pokagon*. A flat map indicates migrations and settlement of the Potawatomi in the region as well as a text overview of the nation. Biographical information on Simon Pokagon is included.
2. *Wigwam*. A wigwam facade would contain an audio. Audio could be started by touching a button, or by using a headset. Audio options would include
 - a. Traditional Music
 - b. Spoken language. This could be either individual words English to Potawatomi, a conversation or a familiar song.
3. *Beaver (or other) Taxidermy Mount*. To emphasize how the Potawatomi used the natural resources, a beaver taxidermy mount could be featured. The different foods, clothing, medicines, etc. that may have come from the individual animal are listed as well as how it was trapped/hunted.
4. *Live Turtle Exhibits*. The current box turtle exhibit would be moved to the central floor outlet and the interpretation re-worked to include Potawatomi turtle legends as well as natural history and species status. The aquatic turtle exhibits in this area can also reflect a Potawatomi emphasis in label design and information.

F. Civilian Conservation Corps

Sub-theme: *The Civilian Conservation Corps utilized the local resources to restore the park and create its northern feel.*

Recommended Exhibits

1. *Stone and Log Facade*. A wall mural of a building or portion of a building would include a 3-D stone and log portion that demonstrates the craftsmanship of the CCC and their use of local materials. A window in the facade provides the text overview of the CCC. Due to the load bearing capacity, real stone may be limited. However, any substitute would have to be extremely sturdy and the masonry must replicate CCC masonry found in park structures.
2. *Tools*. A heavy (but secured) sledgehammer or other tool can be lifted a couple inches to show the strength and dexterity needed to cut stone. Historic photos and diagrams can explain the process.
3. *Audio Interview*. A continuous loop presentation of photos, footage and captioned interviews with CCC boys is presented. The screen could be placed within a space currently used as a live animal exhibit.
4. *Interactive CCC map of Pokagon*. A relief map of the park would LED lights (or other process) would identify the many CCC buildings at the park as well as trails, the beach, pine plantings and other CCC work.

G. Resource Management

Sub-theme: *Maintaining Pokagon's unique habitats requires intelligent management.*

Recommended Exhibits

1. *Tie to pre-settlement vegetation map*. The first exhibit deals with what used to be here and what's here now. A computer generated map can reveal the current vegetation and management focuses. The maps currently featured can also be included.
2. *Live Animal Feature*. The last tank can contain a massasauga or Blandings turtle. The emphasis will be on

endangered species and how management works to protect habitat.

3. *Flip Book*. A changeable flip book features different management projects, explaining the research behind the management and the results. Topics include deer reduction, prescribed burns and ecosystem restoration.

4. *Live Bee Exhibit*. The current live bee exhibit will remain at its current location where there is an access point for the bees to come and go. It is suggested that some of the interpretation deal with environmental stresses to bees and/or insect management issues such as the emerald ash borer.

H. Children's Corner

A small area near the entrance to the display room will contain activities tied to the interpretive themes, but geared to a younger audience.

Recommended Activities

1. *Potawatomi Beadwork*. The Potawatomi are known for their intricate beadwork of bright floral images. This "tanogram-type" activity would provide visuals of the beadwork on graph paper. Children would try to replicate the pattern on a table-top grid using colored 2" tiles. (image) An alternative would be to provide graph paper and colored pencils and invite children to replicate the pattern.

2. *CCC Puzzles*. Puzzles of familiar Pokagon CCC buildings will allow children to re-construct some of the buildings.

3. *Books*. Picture books dealing with natural and cultural history topics such as wetlands, Potawatomi stories and other topics are available to browse.

I. Park Recreation History

Sub-theme: *With its combination of northern habitats and unique facilities, Pokagon has a long history as a popular and special, year-round Midwest destination.*

Recommendations

This theme is already being treated in the entryway and connecting corridor of the Nature Center. Promotional posters from the 1930s as well as historical photos are present. Flat posters and images work well in this area which can be congested at times. It is recommended that this area, plus the Program Room be evaluated for additional images and passive interpretation of this theme.

II. Nature Center Program Room

A. Audio/Visual Equipment

Updated audio/visual equipment is needed for the Program Room. Professional installation and staff/volunteer training is recommended to make the best use of the equipment. Recommended equipment includes:

LCD projector with high lumens that can project from the projector room to the screen wall (35' distance)

Computer with Powerpoint, CD and DVD presentation capabilities

Wireless remote for conducting programs from the front of the room

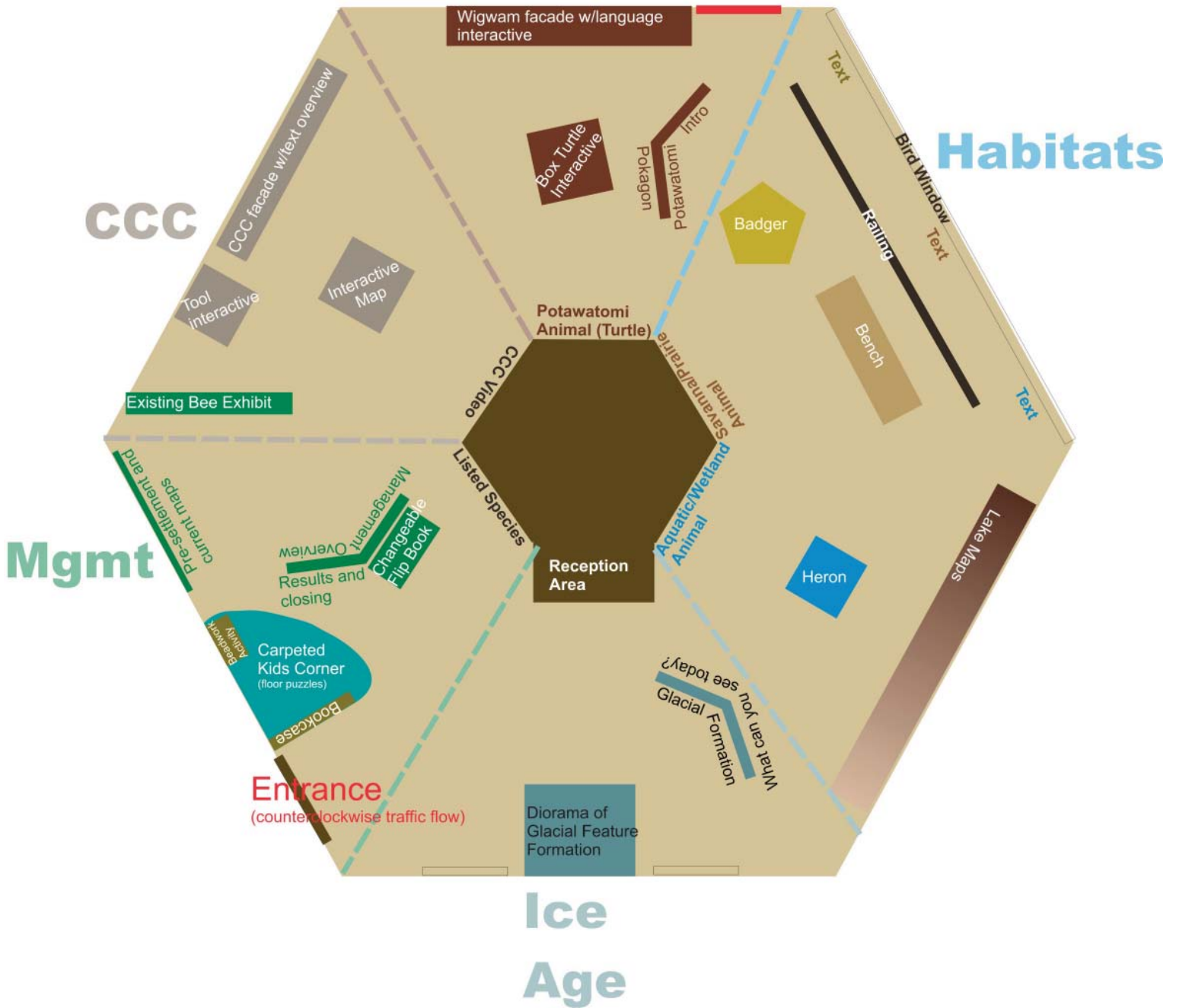
Sound system with speakers, amplifier and equalizer

Additionally, the system should allow space and logistics for the continued use of current 2-projector programs.

B. "Discover Pokagon" Audio/Visual Program

An audio/visual program including narration, music, historic images and video footage is recommended. This presentation would give a glimpse of Pokagon's rich natural and cultural history. It would include what is cur-

Potawatomi



Nature Center Exhibit Floor Plan

rently at the park and encourage visitors to go out, explore and enjoy the property. The total running time would be about 15-20 minutes.

III. Potawatomi Inn

A. General Comments

The inn, with its overnight accommodations, dining and conference facilities, is generally operating at capacity. Its strategic location at the junction of the I-80 Tollway and Interstate I-69 makes it easily accessed.

Many staying at the inn are attending specific functions, either professional conferences or family gatherings. These groups have their own scheduled activities and are not partaking of interpretive programs or visiting the Nature Center.

The inn, with the interpreter, have done a great job with creating a northern Indiana “feel” for the inn through its interior decorating. Taxidermy mounts, photos and many other objects are interpreted.

Several suggestions follow that would bring Pokagon’s interpretive themes to a group of park users that may still be missing this message. All recommendations related to the inn would need the Inn management’s approval.

B. Potawatomi and other regional music

Ambient music is currently used in portions of the inn. Locating regional music would enhance the experience. In addition to Potawatomi music, voyageur music would be appropriate.

C. Table Information

The dining room and hallway tables have glass tops. Interpretive information related to the sub-themes can be placed under the glass, perhaps in a “Did You Know?” format.

D. Snowshoe Chairs

Lounge chairs using a snowshoe look can be found along the hallway. An interpretive label, placed on the wall near the chairs, could include information about snowshoes, how they work, how they were made, Potawatomi materials used, etc.

E. Photos

Several historic photos are found in the public areas of the inn. Some have information, but a few could be interpreted.

F. Hallway Interpretive Center

Two indentations along the hallway from the registration desk to the corner television room can provide space for passive and interactive exhibits. Indentations are about 10’ x 5’ and 10’ x 4’ with a 1’ depth.

Possible Exhibits

1. *Discover Pokagon.* A copy of the program from the Nature Center could be presented on a continuous loop flat screen. To keep hallway noise down, the narration would be as text along the bottom of the screen rather than as an audio.
2. *For more information.* An invitation to visit the interpretive center should be prominent.
3. *Tactile track exhibit.* A matching activity would include a row of raised tactile tracks and corresponding Pokagon wildlife images. By depressing the correct button, a light would come on.

G. Craft Room

Activities are offered in a craft room, located in the inn's lower level. Working closely with inn staff, some craft activities that are regional or historical could be included. An interpreter or volunteer could assist or lead an activity.

H. Pool

The pool has a large mural which is attractive and kid-oriented (cartoon-type animals). A variation of this could use native species and plants, representing the lake ecosystems.



III. Toboggan Slide

A. Warming Center

The warming center offers a good opportunity to engage people who are warming up and waiting for others. The winter theme currently featured on a bulletin board could be expanded into a larger exhibit or display. It would feature winter adaptations related to local ecosystems and winter as it relates to the Potawatomi (foods, shelters, clothing).

B. Toboggan Slide Wayside Sign

The toboggan slide is a wonderful story that includes the theme of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The glacial origin of the toboggan hill could also be included within this sign.

IV. Civilian Conservation Corps

A. General Comments

Pokagon has 1004 acres on the National Register of Historic Areas due to the Civilian Conservation Corps presence. CCC structures are numerous and largely intact. This designation offers protections and restrictions on the structures. Historic accuracy must be adhered to in restoration and repair work.

Currently, several interpretive signs make mention of the CCC. An exhibit in the Nature Center focuses on the CCC.

B. CCC Camp Tour

A CCC camp located at the park during the 1930s is marked with a plaque mounted on CCC stonework. Interpretive programs have led people through the site. Using maps, the interpreter has been able to locate and mark the building corners. Permanent corner markers identifying each building location are scheduled to be placed.

The site could be developed further into a self-guided walk. The walking tour could be presented as a brochure, distributed at the nearby Nature Center. The area should be cleared of vegetation.



C. CCC Pocket Museum at the Original Gatehouse

The original park gatehouse is a CCC structure. The construction of a new gatehouse immediately across the entry road has left the original gatehouse unused. The restroom in the old gatehouse is currently the restroom used by the gate attendant.

The CCC gatehouse's location and architecture provide an opportunity for a themed first impression for arriving guests.

Recommended exhibits include:

Lifesize cut-outs of a CCC worker and a 1940s gatehouse worker.

Cleaned and artificially illuminated fireplace with interpretation of the stonework.

An archival-quality display case containing CCC uniforms.

V. Trine Property

A. General Comments

As mentioned in the Existing Conditions, the Trine Property is a recent acquisition. The property and its facilities are being evaluated, demolished and restored at this writing. Management decisions are evolving as the property is being studied. The property is closed to the public, with the hope that it will be open by 2011.

B. Trail System

Having a new property offers the opportunity to construct a new trail system with interpretation in mind. Identifying key locations for interpretation and connecting them with a trail will be more successful than forcing interpretation into an existing system. Different themes, trail lengths and surfaces will cater to different audiences. Trails can be self-guided and provide a resource for interpretive programs.

C. Interpretive Panels

1. *Fen*. A fen on the property is being restored. This rare and significant ecosystem should be interpreted with a sign.

2. *Gentian Lake*. The 23-acre lake is a high quality kettle lake. Its formation and connection to the other lakes should be interpreted.

D. Programs

1. *Roving*. When the facility opens, a presence in the form of a roving interpreter will be extremely helpful in establishing and connection to Pokagon State Park, helping people learn the new property and serving as a presence.

2. *Traditional Programs*. Audiences are speculative, but it is anticipated that groups may reserve portions of the property for reunions or retreats. The interpretive service should advertise its availability to conduct programs by request for those groups. The Welcome Center and Swenson Lodge provide facilities for indoor programs.

VI. Bulletin Boards

Twelve bulletin boards contain park and interpretive program schedules as well as interpretive information. These bulletin boards should be replaced with new bulletin boards made from recycled materials. Where possible, boards can be attached directly to buildings (campground restrooms). Those on posts getting direct sunlight should have roofs or awnings to increase the longevity of the printed materials on them.

VII. Programs

A. General Comments

Program numbers and attendance have been influenced by several factors over the years. First, staff reductions due to budget concerns result in fewer programs offered. Secondly, there is a nationwide trend away from school field trips, formerly a large percentage of programs. This is due in part to school transportation budget

cuts. Additionally, there has been a shift away from outdoor field trip experiences within the schools. A few of the recommendations attempt to address these dilemmas.

B. School Group Incentives

1. *Win a Trip to Pokagon.* Transportation costs have made field trips prohibitively expensive for many teachers. Consider offering a monthly drawing for a free trip, covering transportation and participant fees. Funding could come from the Endowment Fund or another source.

2. *Interpreter at Your School.* Off site visits are labor intensive and take limited staff away from the interpretive center. Additionally, IDNR now charges \$2.00/student for off-site programs. To make this more cost-effective from both sides, the interpreter might designate one day to be present at a local school. During the course of the day, several programs can be offered for different classes. A PTO may be more willing to pay for this type of program, which reaches a lot of students. Perhaps the IDNR could develop a “per unit” payment system that would be more cost effective for the school. For example, one rate if there is one program, a slightly lower rate per class if two programs are given, and so on. For the interpreter, designating one day for doing several programs at one site (with driving, set-up and take-down being done once) is more efficient than doing individual programs over the course of several days.

C. Home Schools

Home-schooled students have increased in numbers and in their use of the interpretive staff. Parents are able to network and conduct larger field trips with children from many families. The interpretive center and staff provide expertise and a facility not found at home.

The relationship with home-schooled students should be fostered. Home-schools offer the opportunity to work with the same class on more than one occasion, and in smaller numbers. This situation means that lab-type activities, service projects and research projects become feasible.

D. Pre-schoolers

Another group that has increased in its use of the interpretive service is pre-schoolers. Informal gatherings of several parents and their young children are requesting programs.

A pre-school Club could be marketed with a small fee associated with it. Programs would be short, activity oriented and include a self-guided parent-child interaction. A badge or other recognition could be part of it.

Other interpretive agencies (Kalamazoo Nature Center) have successful preschool programs and clubs. Investigating successful programs and their fees is recommended.

E. Roving

Roving interpretation has been an effective way of reaching people who would not necessarily attend a program or visit the Nature Center. Roving interpretation takes the interpreter to where the people are rather than the reverse.

At Pokagon, the beaches during the summer and toboggan during the winter are high use locations where roving interpretation has been effective. Once the Trine SRA is open, roving interpretation at the fishing area will be an important part of linking it to Pokagon State Park.

The interpretive service at Pokagon has a long tradition of being a visible presence at the Nature Center. The visitor contact is a form of roving interpretation. It is informal and spontaneous.

Since a large amount of time is devoted to this, it is recommended that the number of people and contact hours devoted to this be quantified and included in the annual report. This information can be used to justify staffing and nature center hours.

VIII. Staff

A. General Comments

The number and type of positions at Pokagon has fluctuated over the years. Most of this fluctuation has been budget-driven rather than need-driven. Over the years the interpretive service has seen two full-time interpretive positions at the nature center, year-round “seasonals”, receptionists, interns and volunteers.

Pokagon is a year-round park. Its northern theme is not lost on those who love winter. Park attendance remains high as the toboggan and other winter activities kick in.

The demand for interpretation is there, but the staff is not. The one full-time interpretive position also includes resource management responsibilities as well as managing the interpretive service.

B. Program Specialist

It is recommended that an additional full-time Program Specialist position be implemented at Pokagon State Park. This position would be responsible for the bulk of the planning and conducting of interpretive programs, and supervising volunteers. This leaves the full-time interpreter responsible for administration, media, facility oversight, resource management and a lighter programming schedule.

C. Volunteers

Pokagon volunteer staff has been a loyal group, some with very specific skills that are recognized and utilized. A volunteer program can take a substantial time to recruit, interview, train, supervise and evaluate candidates. Ideally, a full-time permanent program specialist would fulfill this role. Or, a long-time, fully-trained and reliable volunteer could coordinate the program.

It is recommended that the interpretive service informally survey other IDNR sites as well as other agencies that rely on a large number of volunteers. How is the volunteer program promoted? What tasks do they perform? How are they screened? Who supervises and trains them? How are they evaluated?

Ideally, the full-time Program Specialist would supervise the volunteer program. In the absence of this, a long-time reliable volunteer would provide oversight and coordination.

Summary of Recommendations

Location	Phase I	Phase II
Interpretive Center	Exhibits	
	Program Room A/V upgrade	
Potawatomi Inn	Regional Music	
	Tabletop information	
	Snowshoe chair labels	
	Check interpretation on historic photos	
		Hallway interpretive center
	Programming at the craft room	
		Pool mural
Toboggan Slide		Winter exhibit at center
	Interpretive sign	
CCC		Self-guided CCC camp tour
	Gatehouse Pocket Museum	
Trine Property	Develop trail system	
	Initiate programming when open	
	Fen and lake interpretive signs	
Bulletin Boards	Replace existing with recycled material bulletin boards	
Programs	Pursue monthly “free” trip for school group	
		Interpreter at your school
	Continue fostering home school programs	
	Develop pre-school program	
Staff	Continue push for Program Specialist position	
	Survey other volunteer programs	
		Develop volunteer coordinator position

Phase I in order of priority with time estimate

Years to complete	1	2	3	4	5
Project					
1. Interpretive Center Exhibits					
2. Interpretive Center A/V upgrade					
3. Initiate regional music at the inn					
4. Tabletop information at the inn					
5. Labels for snowshoe chairs					
6. Check interpretation of historic photos at inn					
7. Offer programming at the inn craft room					
8. Toboggan slide wayside sign					
9. CCC Pocket Museum					
10. Develop interpretive trails at Trine					
11. Initiate programming for Trine					
12. Trine fen and lake wayside sign					
13. New bulletin boards					
14. Develop monthly “free” school program					
15. Develop pre-school “club” programming					
16. Foster home school programming					
17. Continue push for Program Specialist Position					
18. Survey successful volunteer programs					

Phase II in order of priority with time estimate

Years to complete	1	2	3	4	5
Project					
1. Hallway interpretive center at inn					
2. Pool mural					
3. Winter exhibit at toboggan slide					
4. CCC camp self-guided tour					
5. Interpreter in your school program					
6. Develop volunteer coordinator position					

