

Wolf Lake Vision



Photo by Rod Sellers

***Wolf Lake,
Nature and Recreation
at Your Doorstep,
Historic Gateway to Chicago
and Northwest Indiana***



Wolf Lake Vision

Imagine...

a family-friendly outdoor destination of clean air, water and thriving wetlands which supports diverse native plant and wildlife communities...

a place where local residents and visitors to go relax, recreate and refresh in a natural paradise against the backdrop of the industrial and cultural heritage of the Calumet Region...

a natural pathway, a national model of cooperative management by state and local governments from Illinois and Indiana in partnership with local communities and organizations...

an outdoor educational classroom that fosters unique local stewardship opportunities within easy reach of many.

***Wolf Lake, nature and recreation
at your doorstep, historic gateway
to Chicago and Northwest Indiana.***

The purpose of this document is to articulate the vision of Wolf Lake as one lake, identifying long-term strategies for the protection and enhancement of the lake's significant natural and recreation resources and facilities. This document also identified approaches that can be taken to realize this vision, and calls for the creation of a formal structure providing a forum to bring public and private agencies, organizations and interests together to implement these approaches. The Wolf Lake Vision is intended to serve as a guide for the primary land managers and partners, as well as a tool to market and promote the implementation of this vision.

The Visioning Process: Why and How —

There is shared concern among Wolf Lake's managers, users, neighbors, and others over environmental degradation through use of the lake and its surrounding lands in ways that are incompatible with resource protection and recreation. There is consensus for enhancing recreational use and environmental health, and agreement to communicate and coordinate planned activities for the lake. Because of the keen interest in the future of this special place,

it was decided to come together and develop a vision for Wolf Lake.

Beginning in January 2000, a series of Wolf Lake Bi-State Gatherings were organized by the Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative (then known as the CEPA/Friends of Wolf Lake) and were facilitated by National Park Service, Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program.

During these seven gatherings, participants:

- Became familiar with Wolf Lake and its significant resources, and agreed on the importance of articulating a vision and identifying elements to be considered to realize the vision,
- Defined the “focus area” of the Wolf Lake Vision as shown on the map included in this document,
- Reviewed and revised the vision elements, consolidating them under the five broad categories, and identified possible approaches, partnerships and resources that could lead to their implementation and,
- Defined the “Vision Statement” for Wolf Lake.

These gatherings brought together more than 130 participants representing the primary public land managers and other federal, state and local public agencies, community and environmental groups, educators, business and industry, and individuals who have a stake and/or interest in the future of Wolf Lake. Various agencies and organizations involved in the management of Wolf Lake provided information on current and planned activities, which is reflected in this document.

Fulfilling the Vision —

Throughout the visioning process, participants identified and refined vision elements, and the steps that need to be taken to achieve the vision. These elements were consolidated under the five broad categories listed below.

1. Identification, Restoration, Remediation, and Enhancement of Natural and Recreational Resources (The vision elements in this category should be pursued equally in order to achieve this goal.)

➤ **Identify uses compatible with restoration and enhancement of the natural and recreational resources of Wolf Lake.** The primary land managers should increase their dialogue with lake users on compatible uses and how to accommodate them. The Hammond Park Board of Commissioners has already started this process by creating a Wolf Lake Task Force made up of community representatives.

➤ **Identify pollution problems and sources, and propose possible solutions.** The primary land managers should work with federal and state agencies to regulate facilities and communities to improve the water quality of Wolf Lake. Actions should include the identification and correction of non-point source pollution problems from the Tollway and other sources such as storm water runoff, research on the impact of natural biological pollutants, and identification and correction of dumping problems.

➤ **Determine the best management practices for restoration and enhancement of the lake's natural resources** (e.g., management of native/non-native species) through a coordinated effort involving federal, state and local governments working with the primary managers.

➤ **Determine best land protection strategies and determine priorities for land preservation.** Areas to consider include Powderhorn Lake, Egger's Woods, George Lake, Chicago's proposed environmental nature center, proposed camping area for scouting organizations, and the recreational sledding hill at the south side of Wolf Lake. Strategies for shoreline preservation and enhancement, and actions to mitigate flood damage in neighborhoods in the designated flood plain should also be considered.

➤ **Identify and utilize cost-effective restoration and remediation processes, and take advantage of immediately available resources to accomplish this.** (e.g., Dept. of Defense programs to fund remediation of the Nike Missile Site.)

2. Recreation (considering compatibility with the management and operations policies of the primary land managers and the impacts on the resources.)

➤ **Develop a year-around Wolf Lake Recreation Users Guide**, drafted cooperatively by the primary land management agencies with input from local community and supporting agencies.

➤ **Develop reciprocal agreement(s) on licensed recreational activities such as boating and fishing.**

➤ **Continue development of a local regional trail network with connections from Wolf Lake to the NW Indiana Regional Bike Network and into Chicago, building on the current efforts such as the Hammond Citywide Bike Trail Plan and proposed Burnham Greenway rerouting.** Hammond already has plans for connections to the Lake George Path and to the environmental education center at Sheffield and Calumet Avenue.

➤ **Provide winter recreational activities such as tobogganing, sledding, cross-country skiing, ice fishing, and skating by working with primary land managers and others to add facilities and programming.**

➤ **Support the planning of an organized youth camp area by working with primary land managers and youth groups to determine a site and ensure its development.**

- **Continue the public waterfowl hunting program on Wolf Lake where it currently exists, and assess hunting use and demand to determine possible changes compatible with other management practices for the lake.**
- **Plan and implement a comprehensive bi-state sign program.**
- **Improve picnic opportunities by increasing the number of picnic areas and facilities (or rehabilitating existing facilities) to accommodate a larger number of people where possible.**
- **Provide additional beach access (e.g. Wolf Lake Park) for swimming, addressing safety and public education.**
- **Identify current and potential recreational activities and opportunities such as horseback riding, motorcycle touring, canoeing, windsurfing, water skiing, sailing and a lodge. Consider their development as fee-based or concessions activities in current planning efforts by Hammond and future efforts by other land managers.**
- **Promote the enforcement of catch size limits and conduct a fishing education campaign.**

3. Education & Outreach (the vision elements are in priority order)

Identify stewardship opportunities for schools, residents, area businesses, and recreation users, providing opportunities for bi-state community support and involvement.

- **Analyze regional schools' curricula to identify and ensure connections to resource stewardship.**
- **Develop a clearinghouse and speakers' bureau to inform and recruit community participation.**
- **Develop Sponsor Tours involving media outlets.**

Establish a Wolf Lake program at environmental education centers such as the one in Hammond (or at future facilities) that will serve children of all ages and would be easily accessible to all Wolf Lake area students. Consider the development of other vision elements to be included in this category:

- **Develop environmental education programs for use in schools and on-site at Wolf Lake.** (The Southeast Historical/ Ecological Community Awareness project for George Washington High School provides a model).
- **Develop on-site learning stations and interpretive signs around Wolf Lake on natural and human history.**
- **Establish a clearinghouse providing access to information on Wolf Lake for use by teachers**

and students.

- Produce and distribute periodic reports on bi-state meetings and updates on Wolf Lake project.
- Create a web site about Wolf Lake.

4. Planning and Management (the vision elements are in priority order.)

Create the Wolf Lake Advisory Committee as a forum to bring together public and private agencies and interests, to provide community input and to foster communication between the primary Wolf Lake managers and other state/regional planners with regard to their management of the lake.

Consideration should be given to including, but not limited to, the following: IL Department of Natural Resources, IN Department of Natural Resources, cities of Hammond, Chicago and Whiting, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Indiana Toll Road, Lake County Solid Waste Management, Southeast Sportsman Club, Lake County Fish and Game, Cerestar, Unilever, Calumet Ecological Park Association/Friends of Wolf Lake, Calumet Heritage Partnership, Grand Calumet Task Force, Hammond Parks Foundation, League of Women Voters of the Calumet Area, and the neighborhoods of Pulaski Park, Water Gardens, Robertsdale, Hegewisch, East Side, and Harbour Point Estates.

Collect current Wolf Lake related research to form baseline data and determine future research needs through a research summit on Wolf Lake.

Encourage bi-state support any and all federal, state and local agency proposals that would assist with the study and implementation of an aquatic ecosystem restoration of Wolf Lake, such as the proposed U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 206 Project.

Inventory significant natural, historic, cultural, recreational, archeological and economic resources of Wolf Lake and surrounding area to identify information gaps and new research needs.

Identify and communicate needs of local community through;

- Support of the proposed USDA Forest Service Public Perception of Ecosystem Enhancements in the Calumet Region, Wolf Lake and Indian Creek study, and
- Increased outreach to the diverse local communities through meetings and interviews with residents.

Coordinate and include Wolf Lake plans with/in regional Transportation Improvement Plans and identify and develop local/regional rail/mass transit network connections to Wolf Lake.

Explore the need for and the approaches to creating a bi-state Master Plan for Wolf Lake.

5. Funding for Achieving the Vision

Gathering participants identified the following recommendations to guide how best to determine project funding priorities:

- Strongly support the ongoing/high priority efforts of primary public land managers;
- Identify a representative from the primary land management agencies to participate in discussions/prioritization of all potential projects relating to Wolf Lake, ensuring their support for projects proposed by others;
- Begin fundraising/implementation for priority projects that would create energy and provide a model for future projects;
- Limit funding sought only to those projects that contribute to fulfillment of the overall vision for the lake.

The Envisioning Wolf Lake brochure was developed by the more than 130 participants who attended the seven Bi-state Gatherings on Wolf Lake in 2000 and 2001. Hosted by the cities of Chicago and Hammond and the Hammond Port District, the gatherings were sponsored by the bi-state CEPA/Friends of Wolf Lake collaboration. They were facilitated by the National Park Service. Below is a list of business, civic, educational, environmental, and industrial organizations who were represented.

Design of the brochure was funded by the National Park Service, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance. Printing of this brochure was funded by the cities of Chicago and Hammond through the efforts of the Commissioner of the Chicago Dept. of Environment; and Curtis Vosti, Director of the Hammond Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

Those funding the creation of the map through the Calumet Environmental Resource Center at Chicago State University were: Beckman, Kelly & Smith law firm; Chicago Academy of Sciences; Ders Anderson, Map Committee member; Illinois Environmental Council; Openlands Project and Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter.

Those attending the Bi-State Gatherings on Wolf Lake were:

American Veterans Motorcycle Rider Association, Inc.	Hammond Parks Foundation
Arnold Mireles Elementary School	Hammond Schools
BP Amoco Oil Corp.	Hammond Wolf Lake Task Force
Bakery Feeds Company	Harbour Point Estates
Calumet Council of Boy Scouts	Hegewisch Chamber of Commerce
Calumet District of Chicago Boy Scouts	Hegewisch Community Committee
Calumet Ecological Park Association	Henry Clay Elementary School
Calumet Environmental Resource Center	Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant
Calumet Heritage Partnership	Illinois Conservation Foundation
Calumet High School	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Cerestar, Inc	Illinois Department of Transportation
Chicago Academy of Sciences	Illinois EPA
Chicago Audubon Society	Indiana Department of Environmental Management
Chicago Department of Environment	InSites
Chicago Department of Planning	Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences	Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership
Chicago Public Library, Vodak/East Side Branch	Lake County Fish and Game Protective Association
Chicago State University	Lake County Parks
Citizens for a Better Environment	League of Women Voters
Conservation District of Will, South Cook	Loyola University
Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District
Eastwisch Girl Scouts	National Park Service
Ferro Corp.	Northwest Indiana Forum
Field Museum of Natural History	Openlands Project
Forest Preserve District of Cook County	Petrich Law Firm
Friends of the Parks	Pulaski Neighborhood Park Association
Friends of Wolf Lake	Pulaski Park Citizens
George Washington High School	Purdue University, Calumet
Gibson Woods Nature Preserve of Lake County Parks	Sanitary District of Hammond
Girl Scouts of Chicago	Sierra Club, Chicago Group
Golden Gate Community Organization	Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter
Grand Calumet Task Force	Southeast Chicago Development Commission
Hammond Department of Environmental Management	Southeast Environmental Task Force
Hammond Department of Parks and Recreation	Southeast Sportsmen's Club
Hammond Port Authority	Stateline Energy
	The Hammond Marina
	The Neighborhood News
	US Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago

Office
 US EPA, Region 5
 USDA Forest Service
 Unilever
 Ward Environmental Services, Inc.
 Wetlands Initiative
 William Powers Conservation Area
 Windy City Earth Force
 Wolf Lake Industrial Center and Terminals

— Elected Officials —

Richard M. Daley, Mayor, City of Chicago
 Duane Dedelow, Mayor, City of Hammond
 Constance Howard, State Representative,
 Illinois, 32nd District
 Frank Mrvan, State Senator, Indiana,
 1st District
 Doug Nelson, Republican Committeeman,
 9th Ward, Chicago
 John Pope, Alderman, 10th Ward, Chicago
 Donne E. Trotter, State Senator, Illinois,
 16th District
 George Van Til, Lake County (Indiana)
 Surveyor
 Jerry Weller, U.S. Representative, Illinois,
 11th District

The History —

Wolf Lake lies within the city limits of Chicago and Hammond and is a special place to those who work and live in surrounding communities. For early travelers and explorers, Wolf Lake was a place to hunt and trap. Frequented by Native Americans, the lake later attracted French hunters and trappers. Wolf Lake was surveyed by a young Lieutenant Jefferson Davis and, according to legend, visited by Father Jacques Marquette and attracted the family of Abraham Lincoln for fishing and other forms of relaxation.

Today, the lake still attracts fishermen and hunters, as well as being a place where local residents go to relax, recreate and ride the wind. The New York Times recognizes Wolf Lake's conditions as among the best in the country for wind surfing, while water skiing, swimming and canoeing are also part of the recreational scene. A million people each year visit its parks: the William W. Powers Conservation Area in Illinois, and Wolf Lake and Forsythe Parks in Hammond, Indiana.

The Resource —

Fed by springs, Wolf Lake's surface covers more than 804 acres today. Bisected by the Illinois-Indiana state line, the lake has been further divided with the construction of dikes, the Indiana Toll Road, railroad tracks, and towers for high-tension lines. Historically, Wolf Lake connected to Lake Michigan and George Lake, but changes in the landscape

have severed those connections. Today it drains into the Calumet River via Indian Creek. Wetlands adjacent to Wolf Lake include the 250-acre Egger's Woods Forest Preserve, 175-acre Powderhorn Lake Prairie, and the 40-acre Hyde Lake Wetland.

Along the shorelines of Wolf Lake grow

endangered wetland and prairie vegetation, and within this habitat dwell endangered birds, fish and other wildlife such as the Franklin's Ground Squirrel. Birders find migrant waterfowl, songbirds and wintering swans among the 170 species seen at Wolf Lake.

The rich cultural diversity of the neighborhoods surrounding Wolf Lake is preserved by the many historic structures found within. Abandoned Nike Missile sites serve as a reminder of the Cold War. Living veteran memorials established shortly after

World War II are maintained in the William W. Powers Conservation Area.

The two primary managers of Wolf Lake are the City of Hammond and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The City of Chicago, The Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and adjacent communities also are involved in the management of this important natural, historic and recreational resource.

Wolf Lake is a special place for those who work and live in surrounding communities to enjoy opportunities to relax, recreate and refresh on its waters and along its shores.

Cooperative management by state and local governments from Illinois and Indiana in partnership with local communities and organizations will lead the way in accomplishing this vision for Wolf Lake.

It is the responsibility of all to make this vision a reality.