



Kickapoo Reserve  
Management Board

# Biennial Report

FY 2022-2023

*Weister Creek  
Kickapoo Valley Reserve  
La Farge, WI*



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**Kickapoo Valley Reserve**  
**S3661 State Hwy 131**  
**La Farge, WI 54639**  
**608-625-2960**  
**[kickapoovalley.wi.gov](http://kickapoovalley.wi.gov)**



# Agency Overview



The Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) lies in the heart of the ecologically-diverse Driftless Region. The 8,600-acre property offers exceptional recreational opportunities including hiking, mountain biking, canoeing/kayaking, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and camping, that attract visitors from across the Midwest and beyond.

In compliance with Wisconsin State Statute 41.41 (3), the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board (KRMB) manages the KVR “to preserve and enhance its unique environmental, scenic and cultural features, to provide facilities for the use and enjoyment of visitors to the reserve and to promote the reserve as a destination for vacationing and recreation.”

Over 50 miles of primarily shared use trail, 15.7 miles of riverway, and 26 campsites are maintained by KVR staff to support sustainable use by visitors. Forest, grassland, and wetland habitats are managed to enhance biodiversity and maintain ecological integrity. The significant natural and cultural resources of the KVR also provide exceptional educational opportunities, and thousands of adult and young learners benefit from the KVR’s diverse education programming annually.

## Kickapoo Valley Reserve Mission Statement

*"The land in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve shall be protected, preserved, and enhanced so that its unique environmental, scenic, and cultural features provide opportunities for the use and enjoyment of visitors to the Reserve. The Reserve will be promoted as a unique example of the Driftless Area Ecoregion and as a destination for low-impact tourism and education."*

## Kickapoo Valley Reserve Land Acknowledgement Statement

*The Kickapoo Reserve Management Board acknowledges that the state and federal lands that comprise the Reserve fall within the ancestral homelands of First Nations people including the Hoočak Nation. We recognize the sovereignty of the Hoočak and other First Nations and will work towards a shared future by continuing to create collaborative opportunities to protect and preserve these lands.*

## Kickapoo Reserve Management Board

Member	Affiliation
Tina Brown (Secretary)	Ho-Chunk Nation
Dick Wallin	Watershed Resident
Travis Downing (Vice-Chair)	Local Resident
Julie Hoel	Education
Scott Lind (Chair)	Local Resident
Adlai Mann	Ho-Chunk Nation
Dave Maxwell	Tourism
Reggie Nelson	Local Resident
William Quackenbush	Environment
Barb Sarnowski	Local Resident
Luke Zahm	Watershed Resident

## Kickapoo Valley Reserve Staff

### FTE

Scott Walter	Executive Director July 2021-May 2022
Lynn Kronschnabel	Executive Director Nov 2022 - June 2023
Erica Cronk	Executive Assistant
Jason Leis	Property Manager/Law Enforcement
Jonel Kiesau	Training Coordinator through Nov 2022
Maggie Schultz	Training Coordinator March 2023- Present

### LTE

Jackie Yocum	Marketing & Events Spec. , Natural Resources and Recreation Tech.
Ben Johnston	Forester through Aug. 2022
Kolin Muehlenkamp	Grounds Crew Lead
Blake Cwynar	Natural Resources Specialist May 2023-Present
Jim Sanford	Laborer/Helper
Shelby Wolfe	Office Associate

# Message from our KRMB Chair

13 October, 2023



Dear Governor Evers, Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, and citizens of the great state of Wisconsin:

On behalf of the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board (KRMB) and pursuant to s. 504(1)(d) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, I am extremely pleased to present this Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 – 2023 biennial report. Contained herein are synopses of the great resource protection, education, and nature-based tourism work conducted by our staff during the recent biennium, as well as an outline of our agency's goals moving forward.

The KRMB oversees policy development and operations for the 8,600-acre Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR); a property with a unique and rich history jointly managed with the Ho-Chunk Nation. Among the largest public land holdings in southern Wisconsin, the KVR provides exceptional year-round outdoor recreational opportunities, the unique ability to manage for diverse natural communities at the landscape scale, and an extremely active and growing education program that connects citizens to nature in fun and impactful ways.

Lying within the homeland of the Ho-Chunk Nation and occupying the site of a failed federal flood control project that displaced 149 local farm families, the KVR has a strong and unique connection to the past. We recognize and celebrate this past by working together toward a future focused on the mission to which we have been entrusted: to protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources of this wonderful corner of the Driftless Area and to maximize opportunities for our constituents to enjoy them.

Our 11-member Board is composed of a diverse group representing the Ho-Chunk Nation, local residents, Kickapoo River watershed residents and others selected for their focus on the environment, low-impact tourism and education. Each member brings unique expertise and perspective to discussions; this leadership structure is critical to ensuring that decisions appropriately address contemporary issues and that our work maximizes the positive value of the KVR for Wisconsin's citizens.

I hope you find this document informative and, like me, come away reinvigorated by the incredible work being done by our public servants and an enhanced appreciation for the unique values embodied by the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

Respectfully,

*Scott*

Scott Lind  
KRMB Chair



# Education

The KVR Education Program is dedicated to sustaining the mission of the KVR by offering immersive nature education that cultivates knowledge and interest in the preservation and protection of our natural resources. This mission is achieved via numerous specific offerings:

## 1 School Groups

The KVR is a special destination for thousands of students and teachers annually to experience field trips exploring topics from canoe skills and archery to pond science and animal tracking.



## 2 Summer Camp

The KVR offers hundreds of campers unique experiences on the Reserve, with camps for preschool to high school aged children. The camps are anywhere from two days to a full week, and explore topics from insects to backpacking.



## 3 Workshops & Driftless Dialogue

The KVR Education Program provides monthly opportunities to hike, learn, and listen to presentations from local, state, and national experts on a range of natural resource and preservation topics through our Driftless Dialogue Series. We also offer unique and exciting workshops for the public to join us in promoting the reserve's mission.



## EDUCATION PROJECTS

### Monarch Nursery



Monarch caterpillars were collected from areas of disturbance (on and off the reserve) and raised in the nursery then released. They served as ambassadors for their species; educating visitors and campers about their life cycles and the threats to the Monarch population.

### Little Free Library



Visitors and community members can give and take books for free – creating a hub of literature and knowledge for all to share. And it's on a nationwide database of the Little Free Library, literally putting us on the map!

### Citizen-Based Monitoring



On a seasonal and rotating basis, a variety of guided hikes and workshops that recruit, train, and direct citizens to help collect data for the reserve and research projects. Examples: Frog Walks, Monarch Monitoring, Garlic Mustard Gathering. Now starting: Bird monitoring, including training people how to go birding ('Birding 101' course). Also renewing Snake Board project.



# Education

## 4 Events

The KVR offers seasonal educational events for the whole family. From Winter Festival to the Dam Challenge Triathlon and the Creative Communities Art event, there is something for everyone.



### Winter Festival

A free and unique winter event, filled with outdoor family fun. Everything from sled dog races to a horse-drawn sleigh, and so much more.

**900+**

People bundled up for winter



### Dam Challenge

This fundraising triathlon takes participants on a 7 mile paddle down the Kickapoo River, 14 mile bike ride around the Reserve, and a 3.5 mile trail run. It attracts hundreds of competitors from all over the US.

**250**

Race Average



### Creative Communities

A free-to-enter art exhibit, workshop, and fundraiser for people of all ages, connecting schools and the community to the KVR through art.

**300+**

Artists of all ages

## Education Facilities



## Education Program by the Numbers

**23+**

### Instructors & Volunteers

The KVR contracts and utilizes Outdoor and Environmental Education Instructors and Volunteers to provide public programming

**1,400+**

### Community Workshop Attendees



over **950**

Adults involved in programs like Driftless Dialogue Lecture Series, Wisconsin Master Naturalist Training, Teacher Continued Education Credits, and Community Saturday Programs

**200+**

### Youth attended Summer Adventure Camps

**20**

area school districts who visit from a 50 mile radius

**&**

**1,500**

students and teachers for field trip visits each year

THE KVR SERVES

## Kickapoo Valley Reserve and La Farge School District Continue to Collaborate in Reference to Kickapoo Valley Forest School

Over the past two years the Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR) and the La Farge School District (LFSD) have worked together in support of the Kickapoo Valley Forest School (KVFS), which opened in September 2021. The District leases spaces at KVR for the innovative outdoor immersion school, which this coming year is set to achieve maximum planned enrollment of 64 students in grades 4K - 2.

The Kickapoo Valley Reserve and the Kickapoo Valley Forest School are separate institutions with separate staff and governing bodies, while sharing the values of preservation and protection of natural habitats through education. Both organizations commit to continuing to cooperate toward achieving the long-term goals each has established.





# Land Management

The State of Wisconsin and Ho-Chunk Nation jointly manage the KVR with an awareness that the resources protected are not isolated from the surrounding communities and environment but are inextricably linked to them. The primary purpose of ecosystem management is to conserve, restore, and maintain the ecological integrity, productivity, and biological diversity of these public lands.

## 1 Recreation

The KVR has vast recreational opportunities. The trail system is designated for the silent sports of equestrian, biking, hiking, kayaking and canoeing. Year-round primitive camping is also available.

In addition to recreational trail and campsite use, visitors also enjoy bird watching, wildlife viewing, personal use foraging, hunting, fishing, trapping, dark sky viewing, geocaching, viewing ice formations, ice skating, sledding, fall foliage viewing and other nature-based recreation.

**50+**

Miles non motorized multi season trails

**28**

Primitive campsites

**15.7**

Miles of maintained water trail

**45**

Miles Trout Streams

**4.45** Miles of paved greenway trail - "Old 131 Trail"



## 2 Habitat Protection

KVR continues its efforts to promote diverse ecological communities that support biodiversity and sustainability. Staff work diligently to identify and control impacts from natural and man-made sources. In FY22-23, over three hundred feet of Kickapoo River bank has been stabilized to prevent erosion, fortify, nationally recognized, Old 131 Trail and create instream habitat.

Staff and volunteers continue efforts to monitor and protect milkweed stands to increase monarch habitat. In FY22-23 staff planted over 350 milkweed plants to increase habitat quantity and quality on the property.



## National Recreation Trail



On June 3, 2023, National Trails Day, Old Highway 131 Trail was designated a National Recreation Trail by the US Department of Interior. Old Highway 131 trail was one of only 9 trails nationally bestowed this honor in 2023.



## Dark Sky Initiative

Dark Sky Parks are locations known for outstanding views of the night sky.



The Kickapoo Valley Reserve (KVR), Wildcat Mountain State Park, and Mississippi Valley Conservancy are excited to announce they are working together to designate the 13,300 acres of KVR, Wildcat, and Tunnelville Cliffs as Wisconsin's second International Dark Sky Park.





# Land Management

## 3 Habitat Biodiversity

Staff also coordinate appropriate land/habitat management actions that support biodiversity at landscape and local scales. Over 400 species of plant and 100 species of nesting birds have been documented on the property. During FY22-23, staff conducted prescribed burning on 100 grassland acres, monitored and maintained over 40 acres of non game species habitat areas, enhanced pollinator habitats, supported threatened species through habitat improvement and protection and implemented the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board ban on neonicotinoids from cropland seed used on the KVR.

**5,470** **1,500** **950** **680**

Acres of forest cover

Acres of wetland

Acres of grassland

Acres of leased agricultural land



Prescribed Burn on the KVR

## 3 Research and Community Involvement

The KVR continues to support and host research efforts that inform management actions. Research began during FY22-23, focused on bumble bee surveys and relationships between fungus and trees research.

Staff also coordinate monitoring activities with volunteers to identify rare plants so that they may be protected. During FY22-23, staff and volunteers identified a small stable population of Wild Petunia, which is listed as Endangered by the Wisconsin DNR. Such findings emphasize the importance of the property as a refuge for rare and endangered species.

During FY22-23, 10 species identification walks and 12 in-person talks were held and with over 500 participants, local students assisted with the establishment of 10 acres of pollinator habitat, and local students and other volunteers helped with invasive species removal efforts. Staff also developed resource guides for the public. Guides include topics involving history, flora and fauna, invasive species identification, stewardship and recreation etiquette.



Wild Petunia - WI Endangered species



Local students volunteering at Garlic Mustard Gathering

## Timber Stand Improvement

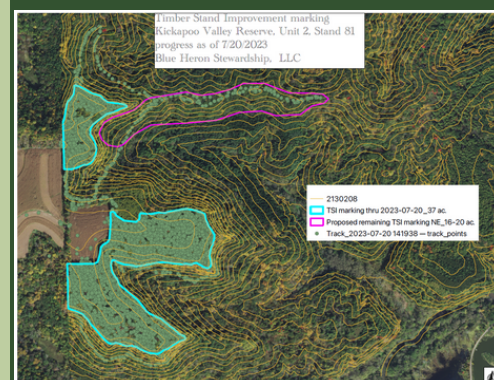
Timber stand improvement work is performed to improve important habitat on the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. This work benefits birds, wildlife, game species and the ecosystem.



- Planted 4,000 - 2 year old oak seedlings
- Removed competing tree and shrub species
- Maintained sustainable access to site
- 520 onsite work hours involving 12 staff and volunteers.
- Total project cost of \$32,941 was offset by National Turkey Federation Grant of \$4,965



The area of timber stand improvement work is shaded in light green on the map below. These areas have received and will continue to receive ongoing monitoring and maintained access to ensure the success of the management area.





# Land Management

## 4 Law Enforcement & Safety



The Kickapoo Valley Reserve has its own Police Department to enforce State Laws and Administrative Rules on the Reserve. There is one full-time officer who also doubles as the Property Manager, and part-time officers.

Officers patrol the property and contact visitors during their stay and address any issues that come up. They also provide quality visitor assistance and customer service. They are well versed on the rules and do a great deal of public relations. Contact with hundreds of visitors is made each weekend, from busy canoe landings, trail users, hunters, anglers and remote campsites, ensuring safety while protecting the KVR resources for future users to enjoy. The KVR hosts trainings for staff and local first responders. Trainings such as large animal emergency response, CPR & AED certifications, and critical incident response trainings have been held.



**EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM**  
Includes Kickapoo River severe condition alerts

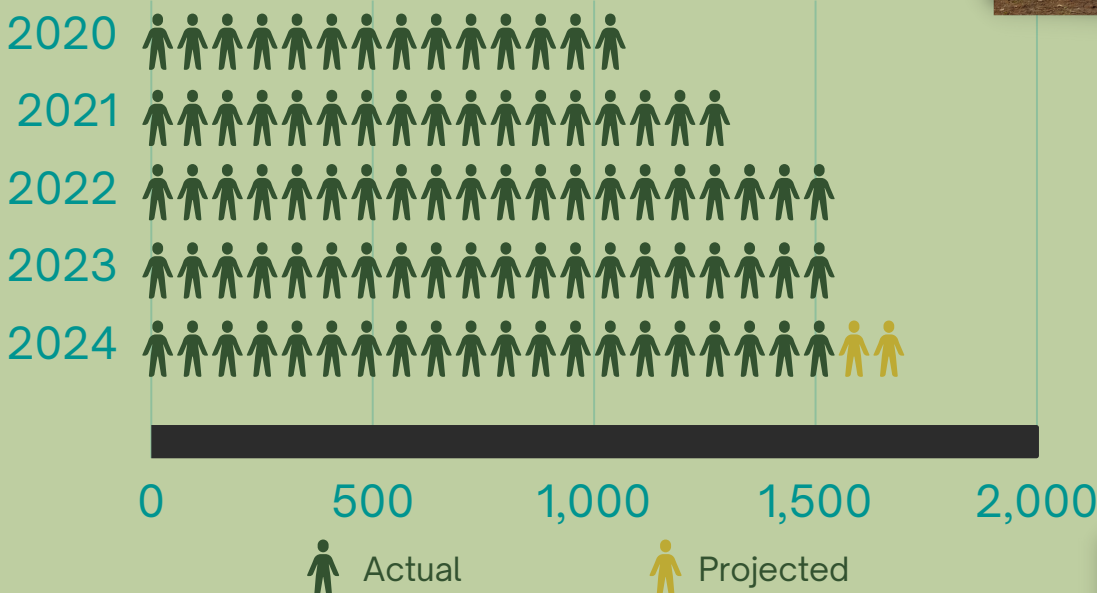
**TEXT**  
54639 La Farge TO 54651 Ontario  
**888777**  
**For Emergency Dial 911**

Standard text messaging rates apply. Opt out at any time  
Trail & River Information [kickapoovalley.wi.gov](http://kickapoovalley.wi.gov)



## Recreational Use Growth

Outdoor public spaces have seen exponential growth. This chart shows actual and projected KVR annual permits.



**64%**

Annual permits are Family permits

**30%**

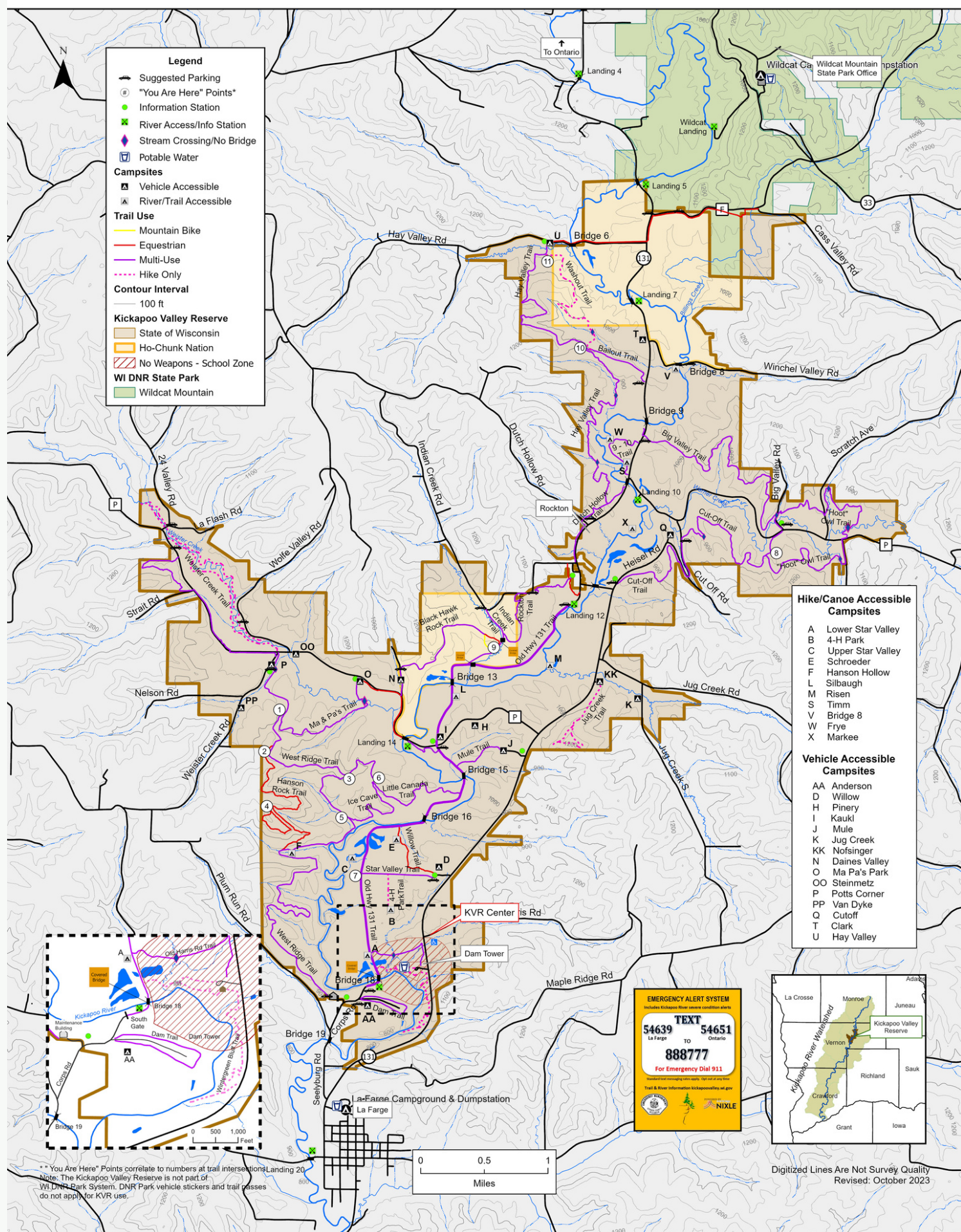
First time Annual Permit holders



**28%** Annual visitor permit increase in FY22-23



# Kickapoo Valley Reserve Property Map

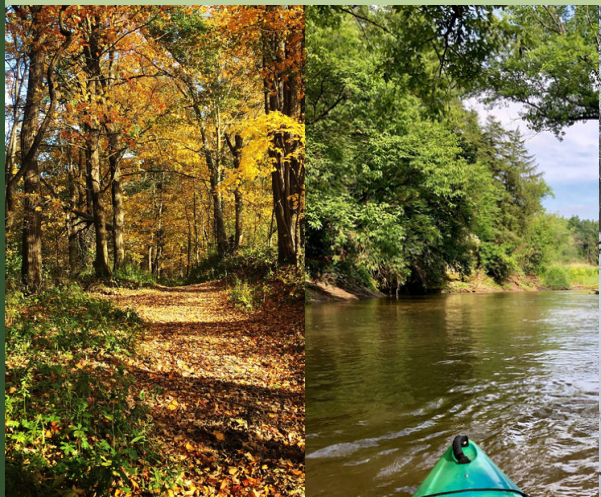




# FY 2022-2023 Performance Measures

Performance Measures	Goal FY22	Actual FY22	Goal FY23	Actual FY23
Visitors at Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.	17,000	14,018	17,000	13,193
Visitor Center building days used for non-Kickapoo Reserve events, meetings, or programs.	50	60	50	43
Interactive exhibit upgrade	Exhibits Complete	Exhibits will be completed on 10/14/2022	N/A	N/A
Education program infrastructure development.	N/A	N/A	Complete second classroom building	Building Completed
Trail infrastructure maintenance, repair, reroute and development.	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles
Number of annual passes issued - trails and river access use.	1,400	1,370	1,500	1460
Habitat restoration: trout stream projects and/or prairie restoration.	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres
Forest Management: inventory, harvest, or restoration.	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres
Student attendance for Outdoor Education Program.	2,550	3,246	4,750	3,458
Kickapoo River maintenance for canoe/kayak access.	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles

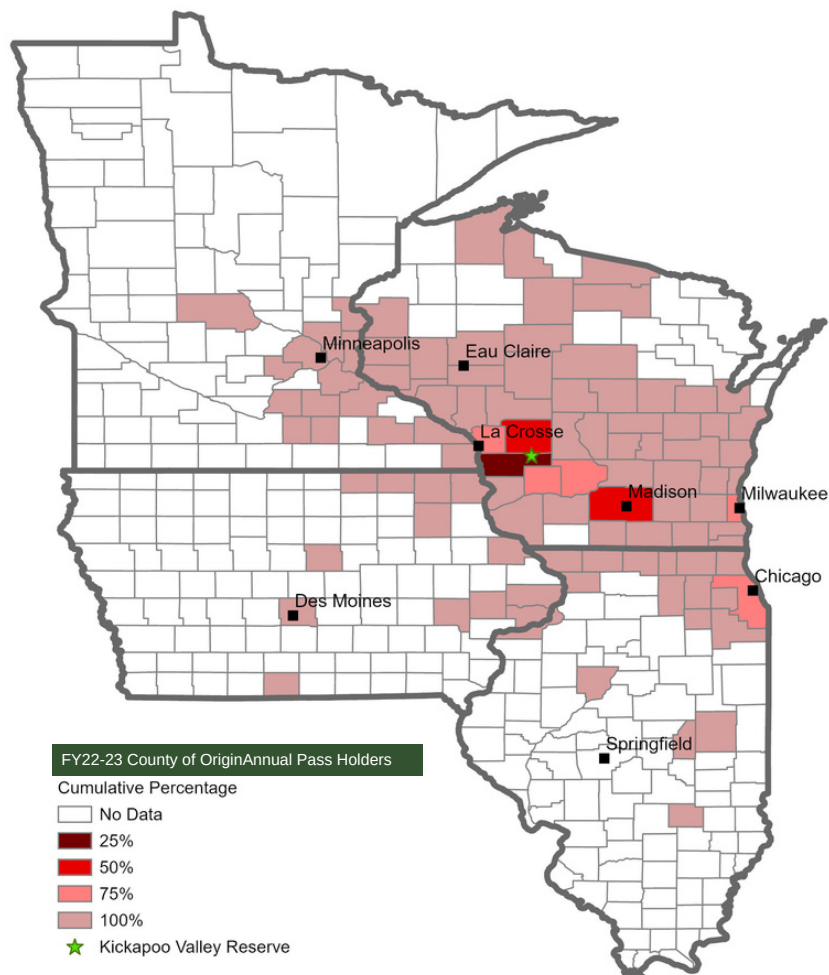
**17.5%** Increase in camping



**253** Unique zip codes of visitor origin FY22-23



County of origin for KVR Annual Pass holders FY22-23



# Measuring Progress

## Performance toward FY 24-25

Performance Measures	Goal FY24	Goal FY25
Visitors at Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.	18,000	18,000
Visitor Center building days used for non-Kickapoo Reserve events, meetings, or programs.	60	60
Education program infrastructure development.	Complete additional administration/ classroom building	N/A
Trail infrastructure maintenance, repair, reroute and development.	10 miles	10 miles
Number of annual passes issued - trails and river access use.	1,500	1,500
Habitat restoration: trout stream projects and/or prairie restoration.	500 acres	500 acres
Forest Management: inventory, harvest, or restoration.	500 acres	500 acres
Student attendance for Outdoor Education Program.	5,000	5,000
Kickapoo River maintenance for canoe/kayak access.	15 miles	15 miles



Welcome

**900+**

Attendees to Winter Festival



Present

**20+**

Informative lecture topics



Projected

**50%**

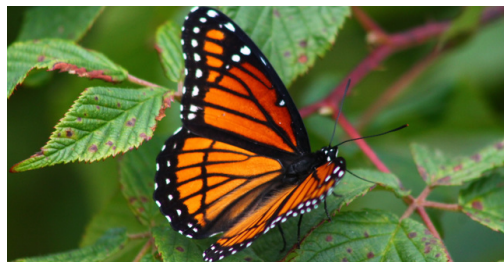
Increase in student programming



Welcome

**300+**

Dam Challenge participants





# FY 23-25

## Programs, Goals, Objectives and Activities



**Goal:** Increase the numbers of visitors at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitors Center.

**Objective/Activity:** Use existing and explore new communication methods to increase public awareness of Visitors Center resources and programs, including the upgraded educational exhibits.

**Goal:** Continue to manage the Kickapoo Valley Reserve infrastructure improvements including trail and river access conditions for hiking, horseback riding, biking, snowshoeing, cross-county skiing, trout fishing, kayaking/canoeing, hunting and snowmobile trail enthusiasts.

**Objective/Activity:** Improve and maintain nearly 60 miles of multiuse recreation trails. Focus on flood resiliency and long-term stability.

**Objective/Activity:** Maintain kayak/canoe access for 15 miles on the Kickapoo River.

**Goal:** Manage the 8,600-acre property in accordance with the founding agency mission to preserve and protect.

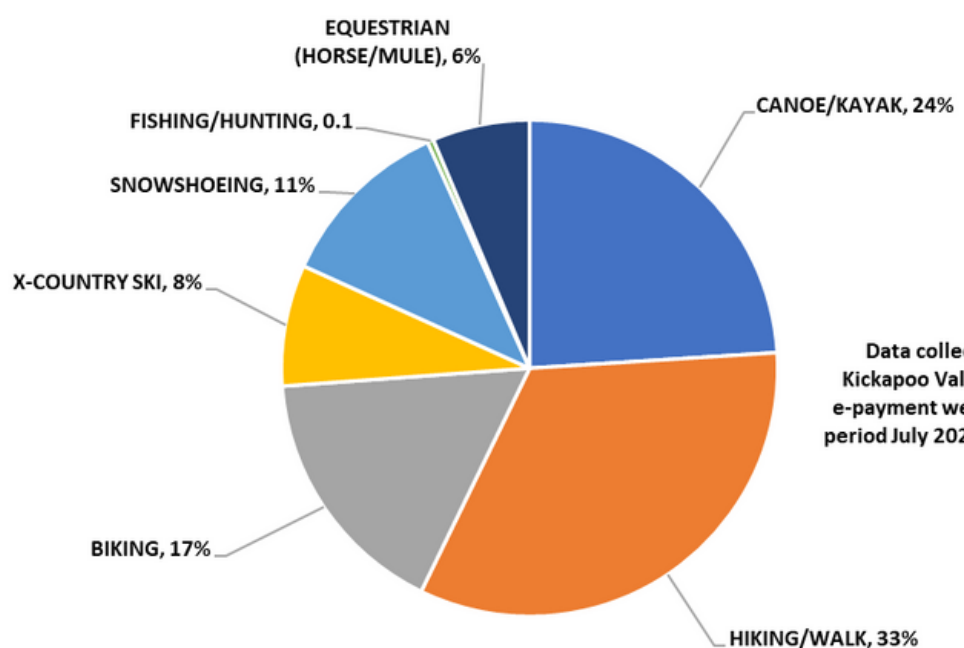
**Objective/Activity:** Remove invasive species to enhance diverse flora and fauna.

**Objective/Activity:** Initiate development of the KVR Land Management Plan in collaboration with Ho-Chunk Nation.

**Objective/Activity:** Collaborate with Kickapoo Valley Forest School staff to develop and implement a plan for monitoring and mitigating impacts associated with school activities on the KVR.



### Kickapoo Valley Reserve Types of Uses

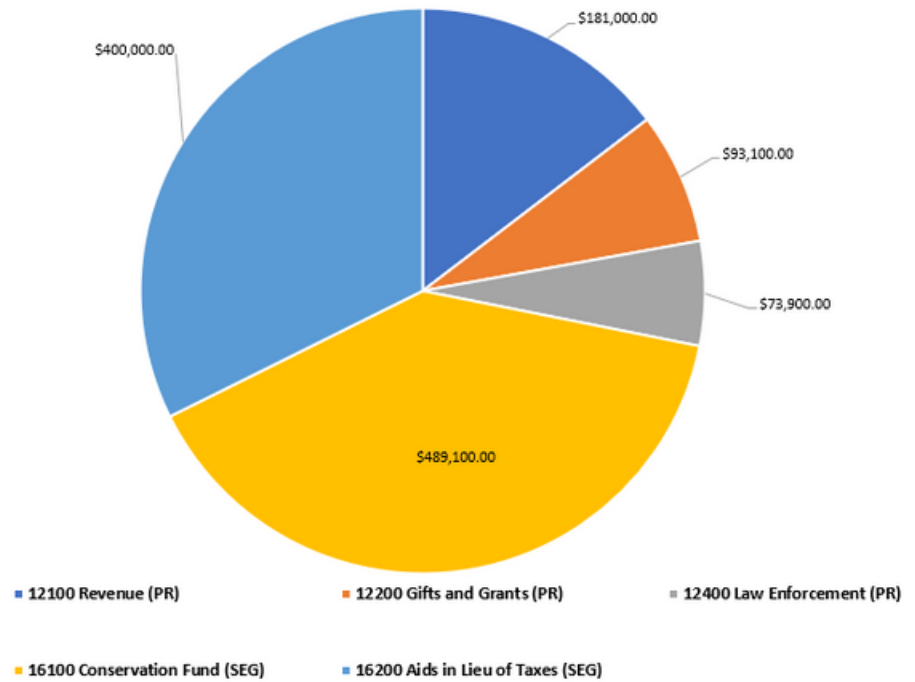


Data collected from Kickapoo Valley Reserve e-payment website for the period July 2021 – June 2023

*\*From a sample of permit sales. The property is also used extensively by hunters and anglers.*

## Kickapoo Reserve Management Board July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 (FY24)

Figures from FY24 Appropriation Budget



## Statement on Flexible Work Schedules

- 1 The Kickapoo Reserve Management Board understands the importance of providing flexible work schedules to employees, recognizing that core services must be available for public users during established business hours. The KRMB is committed to working with staff to address situations where traditional work schedules do not fit the employee's needs, and to accommodate requests for flexibility where operationally feasible.
- 2 The KRMB has four FTE employees, and numerous LTEs. Office hours are 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Daily work hours are also 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday, with staff rotating Saturday shifts and seasonally Sunday & Holiday shifts to ensure public services remain available to users at the Visitor Center.





# Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve



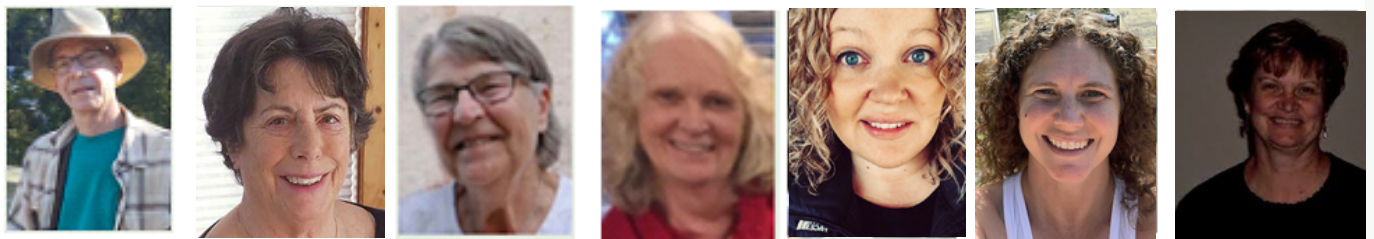
The **Friends of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve** is an 501c(3) non-profit organization of people dedicated to assist the Kickapoo Reserve Management Board in its mission to preserve and protect the lands entrusted to the Reserve by raising funds and public awareness, and by providing volunteers for needed projects.

Notably, the Friends were an integral part in a fundraising campaign to upgrade the educational exhibits at the KVR Visitor Center. The newly redone exhibits opened to the public in December 2022.



## 1 Board of Directors

KVR Friend Board of Directors is comprised of seven KVR Friend members that are elected to each serve three year terms.



## 2 Initiatives of Support

The KVR Friends raise funds in order to provide additional support for the KVR in the following areas:

- Property Maintenance and Improvement
- Education and Events Programming
- New Initiatives
- Miscellaneous purchases

## 3 Provide Volunteers

The KVR Friends host a number of great events and provide volunteers for the KVR's big events. Event volunteers play a major role in making events at the KVR successful!





# Acknowledgements

Many groups and individuals work tirelessly to achieve the mission of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

*Kickapoo Reserve Management Board*

*KVR Staff*

*Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve*

*Ho-Chunk Nation*

*Partnerships and Supporters:*

*Organic Valley, Town of Stark, Go-Macro, Vernon Communications Cooperative, Vernon Electric Cooperative, The Ralph E Nuzum Kickapoo Reforestation Fund, UW Madison College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, La Farge Schools, Viroqua Food Coop, Prairie Springs Trust, Village of La Farge, La Farge Emergency Services, WI DNR, Vernon County Sherriff's Department, Town of Whitestown, Vernon County Emergency Management, USGS, Vernon County Land and Water, Wildcat Mountain State Park.*

*Volunteers:*

*Adopt a Trail, Citizen Scientists, Events, Paddler Pick Up, Disaster Relief*



## Contact

**Scott Lind**  
**KRMB Chair - Kickapoo Valley Reserve**  
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