

KICKAPOO RESERVE MANAGEMENT BOARD

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

Source of Funds	FY25 Adjusted Base	FY26 Recommended	% Change Over FY25	FY27 Recommended	% Change Over FY26
PR-S	75,000	68,700	-8.4	68,700	0.0
PR-O	184,300	196,100	6.4	207,400	5.8
SEG-O	899,500	885,000	-1.6	896,300	1.3
TOTAL	1,158,800	1,149,800	-0.8	1,172,400	2.0

FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT POSITION SUMMARY

Source of Funds	FY25 Adjusted Base	FY26 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY25	FY27 Recommended	FTE Change Over FY26
PR-S	0.25	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.00
PR-O	1.00	1.50	0.50	1.50	0.00
SEG-O	2.75	3.25	0.50	3.25	0.00
TOTAL	4.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	0.00

AGENCY DESCRIPTION

The board is responsible for management of the 8,600-acre Kickapoo Valley Reserve located in southwest Wisconsin's Vernon County. Historically, this is the site of the failed La Farge Lake and Dam project on the Kickapoo River in the early 1970s. In 1999, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers transferred 7,400 acres to the State of Wisconsin and 1,200 to the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs in trust for the Ho-Chunk Nation at no cost to either entity. The transfer was predicated on the Memorandum of Understanding and Management Plan developed between the State of Wisconsin and the Ho-Chunk Nation that the property would be preserved and protected while allowing low-impact recreation and education.

The board is made up of 11 citizen members appointed by the Governor; six members who reside locally and are nominated through local units of government, two representatives recommended by the Ho-Chunk Nation and three direct appointments that represent education, tourism and environmental interests. The board sets policy for the reserve which is carried out by four unclassified civil servants and a team of limited term employees and contractors.

Since 1999, the reserve has evolved into a significant attraction for ecotourists by offering: hiking, biking, horseback riding, canoeing, camping, hunting, trout fishing, cross-country skiing and special events throughout the year.

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General program operations, which include maintenance of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center, and aids in lieu of taxes paid to local municipalities are funded through the conservation fund. Program revenue is used directly to support sustainable trails, campsites, river access, habitat restoration projects, year-round education programming and other program services through visitor fees, agriculture leases, timber harvests, education programs, grants, facility/space rentals and special events. Law enforcement services are provided by part-time police officers who are qualified and certified by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, and through a mutual aid agreement with county law enforcement.

In 2021, the Kickapoo Valley Forest School, a public charter of the La Farge School District, began leasing classroom space for 48 students, kindergarten through second grade, at the visitor center.

MISSION

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 (U.S. Department of Agriculture General Technical Report NC 178, 1994) and as a destination for low-impact tourism and education.

PROGRAMS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Note: Goals, objectives and activities have been revised.

Program 1: Kickapoo Valley Reserve

Goal: Enhance the experience and service to visitors of the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.

Objective/Activity: Upgrade the reserve's website, print material, exhibits and interactive resources to visitors of the property.

Objective/Activity: Use existing and explore new communication methods to increase public awareness of the preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources on the property, including interactive exhibits, mobile apps and place-based learning.

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

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

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 the reserve.

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

Objective/Activity: Implement the reserve's management plans and collaborate with the Ho-Chunk Nation on land management plans.

Objective/Activity: Take steps to conserve dark skies in and around the reserve. Collaborate with local and regional initiatives that strive to raise awareness and provide educational resources.

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES

2023 AND 2024 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Prog. No.	Performance Measures	Goal 2023	Actual 2023	Goal 2024	Actual 2024
1.	Visitors at Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.	17,000	12,142	18,000	15,172
1.	Visitor center building days used for non-Kickapoo Valley Reserve events, meetings or programs.	50	226	60	226
1.	Education program infrastructure development.	Complete second classroom building	Completed October 2023	Complete additional administration/classroom building	Kickapoo Valley Forest School will not be at the visitor center after the 2024-25 school year
1.	Trail infrastructure repair, reroute and development.	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles
1.	Number of annual passes issued – trails and river access use.	1,500	1,510	1,500	1,525
1.	Habitat restoration: trout stream projects, invasive species control or prairie restoration.	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres	500 acres
1.	Forest management: inventory, harvest or restoration.	500 acres	300 acres	500 acres	300 acres
1.	Student attendance for Outdoor Education Program.	4,750	2,012	5,000	2,984
1.	Kickapoo River maintenance for canoe/kayak access.	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles

Note: Based on fiscal year.

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2025, 2026 AND 2027 GOALS

Prog. No.	Performance Measures ¹	Goal 2025	Goal 2026	Goal 2027
1.	Visitors at Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center.	15,500	16,000	16,500
1.	Visitor center building days used for non-Kickapoo Valley Reserve events, meetings or programs.	235	60	60
1.	Trail infrastructure repair, reroute and development.	10 miles	10 miles	10 miles
1.	Number of annual passes issued – trails and river access use.	1,500	1,800	1,900
1.	Habitat restoration: trout stream projects, invasive species control or prairie restoration.	300 acres	300 acres	300 acres
1.	Forest management: inventory, harvest or restoration.	500 acres	300 acres	300 acres
1.	Student attendance for Outdoor Education Program.	3,000	3,500	3,750
1.	Kickapoo River maintenance for canoe/kayak access.	15 miles	15 miles	15 miles

Note: Based on fiscal year.

¹Performance measures and goals were modified or discontinued for the upcoming biennium.

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GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Marketing Specialist
2. Vehicle Lease Support
3. Standard Budget Adjustments

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**Table 1
Department Budget Summary by Funding Source (in thousands of dollars)**

	ACTUAL FY24	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
			FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
PROGRAM REVENUE (2)	\$294.6	\$259.3	\$264.8	\$276.1	\$264.8	\$276.1
State Operations	294.6	259.3	264.8	276.1	264.8	276.1
SEGREGATED REVENUE (3)	\$932.5	\$899.5	\$885.0	\$896.3	\$885.0	\$896.3
State Operations	489.1	499.5	485.0	496.3	485.0	496.3
Local Assistance	443.4	400.0	400.0	400.0	400.0	400.0
TOTALS - ANNUAL	\$1,227.1	\$1,158.8	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4
State Operations	783.7	758.8	749.8	772.4	749.8	772.4
Local Assistance	443.4	400.0	400.0	400.0	400.0	400.0

(2) Includes Program Revenue-Service and Program Revenue-Other

(3) Includes Segregated Revenue-Service, Segregated Revenue-Other and Segregated Revenue-Local

**Table 2
Department Position Summary by Funding Source (in FTE positions)**

	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
		FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
PROGRAM REVENUE (2)	1.25	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75
State Operations	1.25	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75
SEGREGATED REVENUE (3)	2.75	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
State Operations	2.75	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
TOTALS - ANNUAL	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
State Operations	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

(2) Includes Program Revenue-Service and Program Revenue-Other

(3) Includes Segregated Revenue-Service, Segregated Revenue-Other and Segregated Revenue-Local

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**Table 3
Department Budget Summary by Program (in thousands of dollars)**

	ACTUAL FY24	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
			FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
1. Kickapoo Valley Reserve	\$1,227.1	\$1,158.8	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4
TOTALS	\$1,227.1	\$1,158.8	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4	\$1,149.8	\$1,172.4

**Table 4
Department Position Summary by Program (in FTE positions)**

	ADJUSTED BASE FY25	AGENCY REQUEST		GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION	
		FY26	FY27	FY26	FY27
1. Kickapoo Valley Reserve	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
TOTALS	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

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1. Marketing Specialist

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
PR-O	28,600	0.50	39,900	0.50	28,600	0.50	39,900	0.50
SEG-O	12,100	0.50	23,400	0.50	12,100	0.50	23,400	0.50
TOTAL	40,700	1.00	63,300	1.00	40,700	1.00	63,300	1.00

The Governor recommends providing funding and position authority for a marketing specialist position to support tourism, public relations, and wildlife and recreation management in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

2. Vehicle Lease Support

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
SEG-O	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00
TOTAL	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00	9,600	0.00

The Governor recommends providing additional funding to support vehicle lease costs.

3. Standard Budget Adjustments

Source of Funds	Agency Request				Governor's Recommendations			
	FY26		FY27		FY26		FY27	
	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars	Positions
PR-S	-6,300	0.00	-6,300	0.00	-6,300	0.00	-6,300	0.00
PR-O	-16,800	0.00	-16,800	0.00	-16,800	0.00	-16,800	0.00
SEG-O	-36,200	0.00	-36,200	0.00	-36,200	0.00	-36,200	0.00
TOTAL	-59,300	0.00	-59,300	0.00	-59,300	0.00	-59,300	0.00

The Governor recommends adjusting the board's base budget for: (a) full funding of continuing position salaries and fringe benefits (-\$62,300 in each year); and (b) overtime (\$3,000 in each year).