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News release

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UW-Parkside, Kenosha County leaders sign off on 50-year, collaborative land-use agreement

SOMERS – University of Wisconsin-Parkside and Kenosha County officials today celebrated the beginning of a collaboration aimed at improving the ecology and recreational opportunities on 139 acres of UW-Parkside property that borders Petrifying Springs Park.

UW-Parkside Chancellor Debbie Ford joined Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser and others in a signing ceremony at Petrifying Springs.

Under the new, 50-year agreement, Kenosha County will aid in the management of the university-owned land, with the two parties working together on initiatives to improve stormwater and natural resource management.

This relationship allows the county to lend its expertise in natural resources management, helping to protect and improve educational and recreational access to the land, officials said. Both parties also agree that working together, they are more likely to obtain outside funding opportunities for land management.

Chancellor Ford called the agreement an example of collaboration for the good of the region.

“The region is stronger and more vibrant when organizations, groups and agencies work together,” Ford said. “As exciting economic development continues in southeastern Wisconsin, green spaces become all the more valuable. UW-Parkside is proud to work with Kenosha County to help create more recreational and educational green space for area residents.”

Kreuser said the agreement represents a natural partnership for the county and its parks system.

“This is a win-win-win,” Kreuser said. “It’s a win for Kenosha County Parks, which will effectively grow the usable size of its flagship park, Petrifying Springs. It’s a win for UW-Parkside, which is addressing a land management challenge. And it’s a win for the community, which will soon have the opportunity to enjoy this land in new ways.”

The 139 acres in the agreement includes roughly 76 acres that lie within the Pike River floodplain, which the county is continuing to proactively protect and restore.

It also includes an unofficial system of trails, created over the years by mountain biking groups, which Kenosha County Parks will now manage in the same fashion as a popular system of trails at Silver Lake Park.

“We look forward to leveraging partnerships with groups such as the Kenosha Area Mountain Bike Association to ensure that these trails are laid out safely and maintained properly,” said Kenosha County Parks Director Matthew Collins.

Kreuser also noted the support of other organizations with an interest in the area’s ecology, including Root-Pike WIN and the Kenosha Sportfishing and Conservation Association.

The agreement won the support of the UW System Board of Regents in April and the Kenosha County Board earlier this month.

Supervisor Dennis Elverman, chairman of the County Board’s Public Works and Facilities Committee, said the agreement is beneficial to all parties involved.

The agreement has a 50-year term, renewable for another 50 years upon agreement by both parties. The annual rental fee is \$1, payable by the county to UW-Parkside.

“Kenosha County will be able to leverage its experience with securing grants and improving and protecting parkland,” Elverman said. “This improves our quality of life, at a very low risk to county taxpayers.”

The agreement provides the following opportunities:

- **Natural resource inventory and ecological management plan:** This plan will identify and map ecological communities on the property to develop a holistic restoration plan that addresses environmentally sensitive areas and aids in the removal of invasive species. While UW-Parkside has mapped a majority of the natural areas with student-based research projects, Kenosha County will use the existing data to create a comprehensive map to be used to define potential restoration and funding resources.
- **Trail development:** Kenosha County will work with community partners to develop public access to sustainable mountain bike and multiuse recreational trails.
- **Pike River restoration:** Kenosha County is actively engaged in developing a multi-phased approach to Pike River restoration within Petrifying Springs Park. Coordinating the continuation of this project through the UW-Parkside property will improve outcomes.

UW-Parkside Provost Rob Ducoffe stressed the value of educational space that will be preserved under the new agreement.

“Our campus classrooms extend far beyond the beautiful buildings,” Ducoffe said. “Faculty and students take full advantage of the green space around UW-Parkside to enhance the learning experience. The partnership with Kenosha County helps preserve spaces that will ultimately prepare the next generation of natural resource stewards.”

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