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News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Jennie Tunkieicz, Kenosha County
262-653-2831
John Mielke, UW-Parkside
262-595-3226

Kenosha County, UW-Parkside strike land-use agreement for natural area bordering campus, Petrifying Springs Park

SOMERS – Kenosha County and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside plan to enter into a collaborative land-use agreement that will enhance the management of 139 acres of natural land alongside Petrifying Springs Park, officials announced Friday.

This agreement establishes a framework by which UW-Parkside and the county would work jointly to identify and pursue initiatives to improve stormwater and natural resource management and public recreational access to the university-owned land, which is contiguous to the Pike River.

The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents approved the agreement on Friday. It now goes before the Kenosha County Board, with final action expected at the May 7 meeting.

“This is an exciting opportunity for two public institutions to work together in a way that will benefit the whole community,” said Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser. “As a UW-Parkside alumnus and a frequent user of Petrifying Springs Park, I couldn’t be happier to see us engaged in this way.”

UW-Parkside Chancellor Debbie Ford noted that 50 years ago, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside was created by the community, for the community. She said the university’s founders envisioned a learning environment beyond indoor classrooms.

“The area surrounding campus offers countless applied research opportunities for UW-Parkside students and faculty,” Ford said. “The partnership with Kenosha County, covering more than 130 acres, will protect and improve recreational and educational access to an amazing property that connects UW-Parkside to Petrifying Springs Park.”

Of the 139 acres included in the agreement, approximately 76 acres are located within the Pike River floodplain. The natural areas within the property are densely wooded, featuring diverse native species.

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 said the land-use agreement will enhance and sustain learning and research opportunities and increase public awareness of the natural resources in our area.

“The 50-year legacy of UW-Parkside is all about connecting with the community,” Ducoffe said. “This agreement is another example of that valued relationship.”

Kenosha County Parks Director Matthew Collins said working together with UW-Parkside will likely increase the potential for grant-funded opportunities, as the partnership demonstrates a more effective, multijurisdictional commitment to restoration activities.

“We value the partnerships that Kenosha County Parks has with various organizations, public and private,” Collins said. “This relationship with UW-Parkside will only further our stewardship of the land, and the amenities we’re proud to offer to the public.”

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.

“Strategic partnerships and collaborations are often the key to working toward the public good, said UW-Parkside Vice Chancellor Scott Menke. “What UW-Parkside could not accomplish on its own becomes possible with partners like Kenosha County. The result of this land-use agreement will be improved and protected recreational and educational access to an incredible land and water resource.”

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