

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item

**SUBJECT:** Request approval to initiate an amendment process for the Kohler-Andrae State Park master plan.

**FOR:** June 2017 Board meeting

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Diane Brusoe, Property Planning Section Chief

**SUMMARY:**

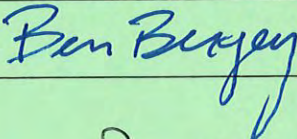
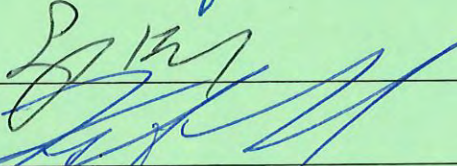
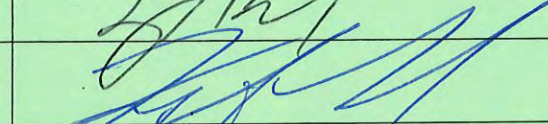
Per Chapter NR 44.04(2) Wisconsin Administrative Code, the department is requesting NRB approval to initiate an amendment process for the Kohler-Andrae State Park master plan. Kohler-Andrae State Park has an existing master plan that was NRB-approved in 1989, but it is not anticipated to be updated in the very near future.

The potential changes to the state park access in addition to the anticipated public interest in the proposed changes contributed to the department's recommendation to conduct an amendment process to evaluate alternatives, impacts and benefits. If approved to proceed, the amendment process will include opportunities for public review and comment. After the amendment evaluation, the department will return to the NRB with a recommended action.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The department recommends board approval to initiate a master plan amendment process for the Kohler-Andrae State Park.

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):**

- Background memo
- Type name of attachment if applicable
- Type name of attachment if applicable
- Type name of attachment if applicable

Approved by	Signature	Date
Ben Bergey-Director, Bureau of Parks & Recreation		6/2/17
Sanjay Olson-Administrator, Division of Fish, Wildlife & Parks		6/2/17
Cathy Stepp, Secretary		6/7/17

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

**CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM**

DATE: June 2, 2017

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Cathy Stepp - Secretary, Department of Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Request approval to initiate a master plan amendment process for the Kohler-Andrae State Park.

**Background**

Kohler-Andrae State Park, located in Sheboygan County, includes two adjacent Wisconsin State Parks located in the Town of Wilson, a few miles south of the City of Sheboygan. Terry Andrae State Park, established in 1927, and John Michael Kohler State Park, established in 1966, total 988 acres. The parks contain over two miles of beach and sand dunes along the shoreline of Lake Michigan. To simplify management and use, the parks are managed as one property.

Adjacent to the northern boundary of the park, the Kohler Company owns 247 acres of land along the Lake Michigan shoreline. In 2014, the company proposed to develop this property into a world-class 18-hole public golf course that incorporates the natural beauty of the site into the course design with a goal to be rated as one of the top 50 golf courses in the world.

The Kohler Company had initially proposed accessing its property using a new bridge over the Black River. Concerns over environmental impacts of a bridge on the river and its adjacent floodplain prompted the company to look toward using alternative access. In 2015, the department received a request from the Kohler Company that identified approximately five acres of Kohler-Andrae State Park lands that it sought to utilize in conjunction with the company's proposed golf course. Specifically, Kohler proposed to construct the following on park lands: (1) a roadway and roundabout to access its lands; (2) utility access; and (3) a maintenance facility. In 2016, the department prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that described in more detail the proposed developments. After this draft was completed, department staff recommended that a master plan amendment process be initiated to fully review and assess potential state park impacts.

**Master Plan Amendment Process**

Section NR 44.04(2) Wis. Admin. Code requires NRB notification and authorization before the department may initiate a master plan amendment:

*".....a plan amendment or revision may be proposed at any time by the department or any person, and an amendment or revision request shall be filed in writing with the secretary of the department. The secretary shall inform the board of requests as filed under this section, and the department shall notify the person or persons making the request of the board's decision."*

**Description of the Proposed Change and Possible Park Benefits**

If approved, the amendment process will evaluate the Kohler Company's requests. This evaluation may result in alternative proposals based on input received through the planning process. These alternatives may include reconfiguration of the current state park entrance road and other traffic control and safety measures that could be mutually beneficial to park users and golf course users. (Refer to Figures 1 and

2.) Such reconfiguration may include redesigning, widening and repaving the entrance road from County Highway V to the contact station thereby facilitating the flow of traffic into and out of the park and the golf course in order to minimize traffic congestion and safety concerns. The contact station area may be reconfigured to improve park user registration.

Kohler Company reasons that the proposed maintenance area near the northern boundary of the state park is a viable option with minimal impacts to park users since that portion of the park is not typically utilized by the public and contains an existing park maintenance building.

Also, the Kohler Company lands are privately owned and are currently not open to the public. The Kohler-owned golf course would be available for recreational use creating an additional public benefit. Other possible benefits to Kohler-Andrae State Park may include but are not limited to increased visibility and public awareness of the park which may result in increased park visitation and revenue.

Kohler has petitioned the City of Sheboygan to annex its proposed golf course area and a portion of the state park that includes the contact station and maintenance building. These facilities are currently served by wells and onsite septic systems that the state must maintain. If these lands are annexed, the affected park lands could be served by municipal sewer, water, fire and police services.

#### **Preliminary Evaluation of Feasibility of Requested Changes**

The department has completed an initial review of the request. Please note that the department has not begun a detailed analysis of this request.

- Anticipated compatibility with existing uses and management of the property: Allowing for the Kohler Company to use Kohler-Andrae State Park lands may modify the designation of current park master planned lands. This reduction of classified park lands within the master plan does not surpass the threshold of a plan variance, but other potential visitor impacts may occur. Because of these possible impacts, the department recommends that a master plan amendment process be initiated.
- Preliminary determinations regarding environmental sustainability of the proposal: This master plan amendment is an integrated analysis action under Chapter NR 150, Wis. Admin. Code, and is in compliance with the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act. Additional ecological and culture inventories will be conducted within the proposed use area. After initial review, the department believes an environmentally sustainable design may be possible.
- Known level of public interest or controversy: The department understands that there is significant public interest in this proposal from both the local community and park users. In addition, there are a number of community questions about the other associated developments on the Kohler-owned lands that will need to be considered as part of this request.
- Timing considerations: The 1998 Kohler-Andrae State Park master plan does not have a scheduled update for the very near future. The amendment process is the appropriate procedure to consider this request at this time. The department anticipates the review, public involvement, and development of alternatives for the amendment request to take 9-12 months.

**Recommendation**

The department recommends approval to initiate the amendment process for the Kohler-Andrae State Park master plan for the purpose of evaluating the Kohler Company's requests.



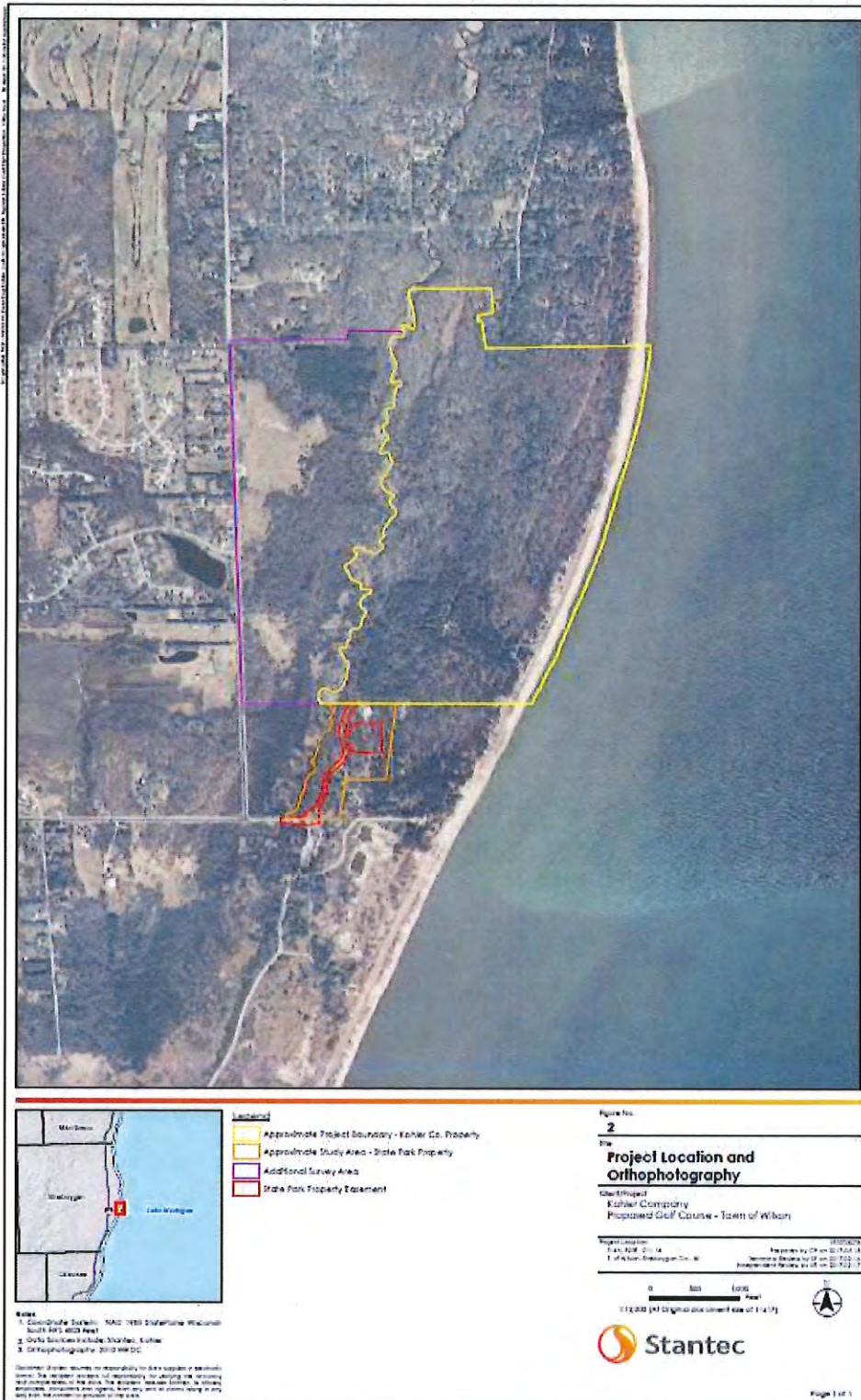


Figure 1: Project Location and Orthophotography.

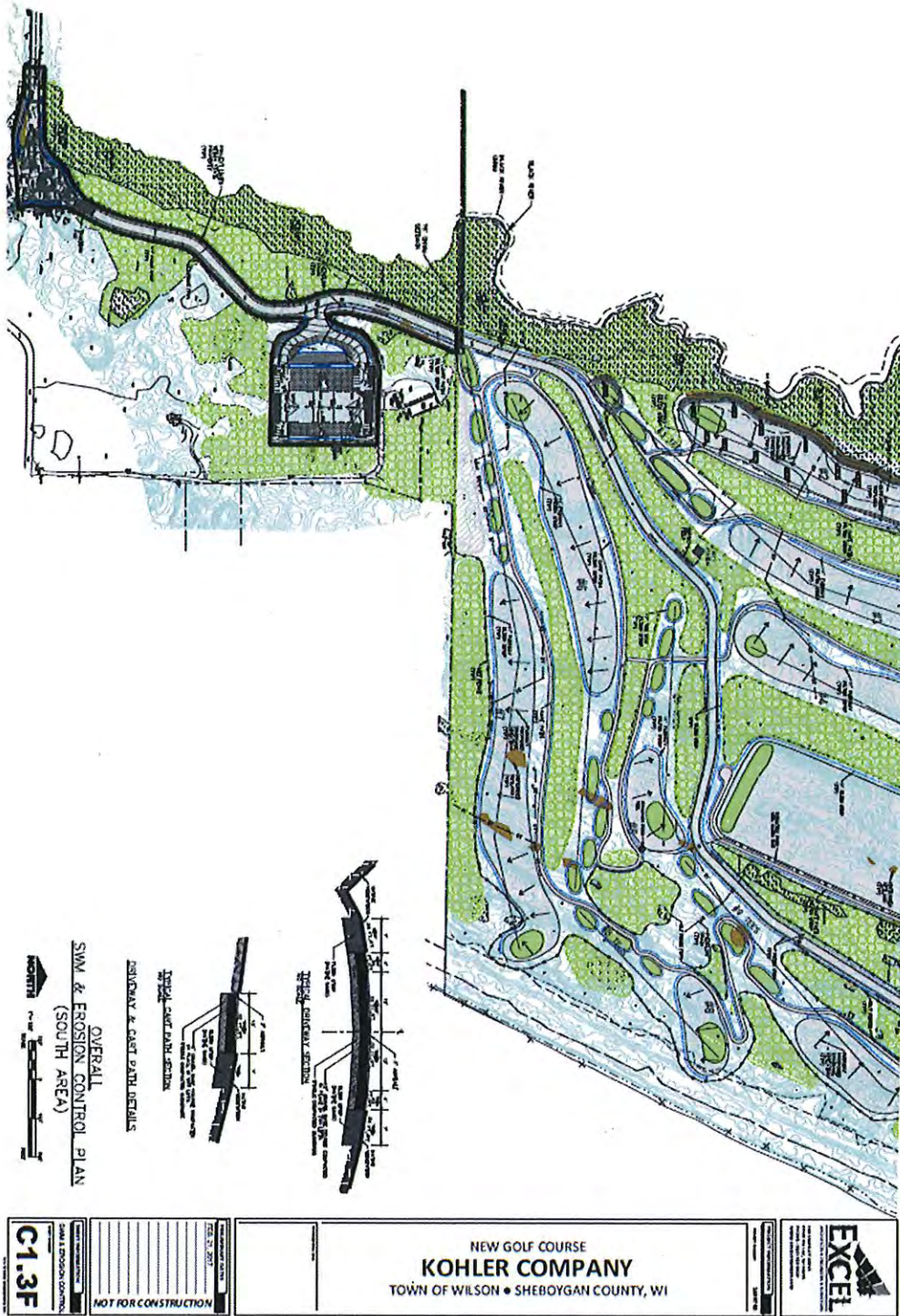


Figure 2: SWM & Erosion Control Plan (south area).