



Tobacco-Free Parks and Beaches

Good for kids. Good for the community. Good for you.



83% Of Wisconsinites don't smoke.

Tobacco-free parks and beaches protect our kids.

According to a leading secondhand smoke expert, secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.¹ Tobacco-free policies ensure kids and families don't have to worry about being exposed to this deadly toxin in the spaces they play. Tobacco-free policies help prevent youth tobacco use, particularly by establishing tobacco-free community norms and by providing adults the opportunity to be tobacco-free role models throughout the community.²

Tobacco-free parks and beaches protect Wisconsin's lakes and wildlife.

Cigarette butts are the most commonly discarded piece of waste worldwide and about 65% of cigarettes on average is littered. It is estimated that 1.69 billion pounds of cigarette butts end up as toxic trash each year.³ Taxpayers and local authorities currently bear the costs of cleaning up the cigarette butt waste.

Wisconsin is known for its beautiful lakes and world-class fishing. Cigarette butts wash into storm drains, which flow into creeks and other bodies of water. The butts leach harmful chemicals into the water. In one study, a single cigarette filter in a liter of water killed half the fish living there. Cigarette butts are not fully biodegradable (they remain intact for about 10 years) and can be eaten by animals who think they are food.⁴ Children may also ingest the cigarette butts that are discarded on the ground.

Residents expect tobacco-free spaces.

Tobacco-free policies for park areas ensure that all citizens have a healthy recreational environment. People go to parks to exercise or relax, not to use tobacco. People, who smoke work, eat, shop, travel, and reside in smoke-free environments every day. 83% of Wisconsinites do not smoke.⁵

¹ CARB. (2003). "Technical Support Document for the Proposed Identification of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant: Part A," Technical Report. California Environmental Protection Agency, California Air Resources Board, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, Chapter 5, pp. V6-V19.

² Perry, C. (1999). Creating Health Behavior Change: How to Develop Community-Wide Programs for Youth. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

³ Carlozo LR. Cigarettes: 1.7 billion pounds of trash. Chicago Tribune. 2008 Jun 18

⁴ Register, K. "Underwater Naturalist" Bulletin of the American Littoral Society, Volume 25, Number 2, August 2000.

⁵ 2015 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Wisconsin communities that have smoke-free or tobacco-free policies:

- Appleton
- Greenfield
- Shorewood
- Verona
- Wisconsin Dells
- St. Croix County
- Brown County
- Columbia County
- Mauston
- Baraboo

Are local governments able to enact policies restricting tobacco use?

Neither federal nor state law prohibits local governments from regulating tobacco use outdoors.⁶

Are there any Wisconsin state laws that restrict outdoor tobacco use?

There is currently no state law that regulates tobacco use in public parks, although smoking is prohibited in certain outdoor locations, including sports arenas, bus shelters and public conveyances.⁷

Should a policy cover all property and activities or just youth events?

Both types of policies exist, but the recent trend is toward comprehensive “all property” policies because they protect everyone from secondhand smoke, rather than just particular groups at “youth events.” In addition, the comprehensive policies are easier to communicate and help improve compliance and enforcement of the policy. The comprehensive policies have the most benefit and cost savings in litter reduction since they cover all times of the day.

Should a policy cover the use of all tobacco products, or just smoking?

Policies that cover the use of all tobacco products provide the most protection for park users, allow for the easiest enforcement and ensure tobacco use and non-electronic cigarette use is not being modeled for young people.

How do other Wisconsin communities enforce their policies?

Tobacco-Free policies are largely self-enforcing and can be properly enforced with a combination of adequate signage and community education. Many tobacco users look for “tobacco-free” or “smoke-free” signs. These signs empower everyone using the parks to provide friendly reminders about the policy to patrons. Any infraction can be reported and handled in the same manner as an alcohol or litter complaint. In addition to signs, communities notify their residents in a variety of ways: announcements at sporting events and events, local media, newsletters, policy reminder cards, brochures, notifications sent to sports associations, and coach and staff trainings.

Since many school districts prohibit tobacco use at their outdoor facilities, a tobacco-free policy for city-owned outdoor recreational facilities creates continuity and eliminates confusion about which facilities are tobacco free. A tobacco-free policy also provides support to recreational organizations that already have an existing policy and use the city’s facilities.

⁶ [WIS. STAT. § 101.123\(4m\)](#)

⁷ [WIS. STAT. § 101.123\(2\)\(e\)](#)