

**University of Wisconsin-Madison
Facilities Planning & Management
Lakeshore Nature Preserve**

Policy on the Prohibition of Slacklines, Hammocks and other Recreational Devices

May 12, 2016

Policy Statement: In accordance with the UW-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve's mission statement (stated below), and in order to maintain the health and vitality of the trees and vegetation in the Preserve while minimizing personal safety risks for all users, the Preserve prohibits the use and attachment of weight bearing ropes, slings, belts, bands, and assorted other attachments to trees and/or posts within the Lakeshore Nature Preserve for recreation or leisure purposes. This specifically includes slacklines, hammocks and rope swings.

Definitions:

A Hammock is a sling made of fabric, rope, or netting, suspended between two points, used for swinging, sleeping, or resting. It normally consists of one or more cloth panels, or a woven network of twine or thin rope stretched with ropes between two firm anchor points such as trees or posts.

Slacklining refers to the act of walking or balancing along a suspended length of flat nylon webbing that is tensioned between two anchors (ie. trees or posts) allowing for a person to balance on and/or perform acrobatic movements. Slacklining is similar to slack rope walking and tightrope walking but on a loose assembly rather than a tight connection.

A Slackline is the device used in slacklining and is typically a flat nylon "rope" with anchor or tie points on each end which connects to two or more points (ie. trees or posts) to provide tension on the rope/line.

A Rope Swing is a rope, line of fabric, ribbon or chain tied to or anchored to a tree trunk, branch or other stable object that allows individuals to swing from land out into a body of water, typically for the purposes associated with swimming. Rope Swings usually have a large knot or board tied to the loose end to sit or stand on.

Justification:

1. The UW-Madison Grounds department does not permit attachments of any sort to any campus trees.
2. Trees within the Lakeshore Nature Preserve are not evaluated with regards to safety, stability and strength for use with active recreational activities. Some trees, especially those off-trail, may be weak wooded or in decline and are left to fall in place to provide natural bio-habitat in the Preserve.
3. Driving temporary or permanent posts into the ground may damage buried archeological sites prevalent throughout the Lakeshore Nature Preserve. Damaging archeological sites is against the law.
4. Users are required to stay on defined trails within the Preserve. Most trees in the Preserve are located off-trail and therefore are prohibited from visitor access.
5. Mechanical attachments to trees, especially oaks and elms, can result in wounds and injuries increasing susceptibility of these trees to vascular diseases and insect infestations.
6. Hammock use typically involves tying off a hammock to two or more trees and users typically do not provide any type of protection for the trees or their bark. Doing so creates the potential for damage to the tree bark and again increasing their susceptibility to disease and insect infestations.
7. Slacklining is an inherently risky sport resulting in slips, falls and potential for bodily injury to those participating in the activity.
8. Even though most slackline users make attempts to protect trees in the process of setting up their equipment, this sport is not an environmentally sensitive use of the trees and vegetation within the Preserve.

"The University of Wisconsin-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve permanently protects the undeveloped lands along the shore of Lake Mendota where members of the campus community have long experienced the intellectual and aesthetic benefits of interacting with the natural world. The Preserve shelters biologically significant plant and animal communities for teaching, research, outreach, and environmentally sensitive use; and safeguards beloved cultural landscape features. The Preserve is as essential to the university as its lecture halls, laboratories, and playing fields. It contributes to a powerful sense of place and fosters an ethic of stewardship to promote mutually beneficial relationships between humans and the rest of nature." -- Lakeshore Nature Preserve Mission Statement, June 7, 2005

Other Information:

Currently, slacklining is permitted in a variety of City of Madison public parks but not in conservation areas. The entire UW- Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve is zoned "conservancy" by the City of Madison. UW-Madison faculty, staff and students interested in slacklining are encouraged to use City of Madison Parks for these types of activities. In the City's policy statement, "*Slacklining participants and spectators assume any and all risks associated with this activity including, but not limited to death, paralysis and serious injury.*"

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References:

1. Lakeshore Nature Preserve Website (for map of boundaries and current policy statements)
<http://lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/>
2. City of Madison Slacklining Policy & Guidelines
<https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=3519173&GUID=9A4B75F0-7374-4F9D-A6EC-27DC9E9AD045>
3. City of Madison Parks Slacklining Pilot Project Information, June 2015
<https://www.cityofmadison.com/parks/slacklining/>
4. UW-Madison Slackline Club
<https://win.wisc.edu/organization/slacklineclub/about>
5. UW-Madison Slackline Facebook page, “Badger Slackers”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/284064041797149/>
