

APPENDIX B: TRAIL DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

This section provides guidance on a variety of trail issues for planners and developers of the Ice Age NST across the state. It also provides introductory material on these issues. For each individual trail segment, the managing authority will make the final development and management decisions. The most current information about trail development and management standards, as well as a copy of the “Ice Age National Scenic Trail: A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance” is available from the National Park Service, Madison (Wisconsin) Trails Office upon request.

The way in which the Ice Age NST is designed, developed and maintained should make it easily recognizable as a National Scenic Trail (NST). The 1966 Department of Interior report, “Trails for America,” which helped set the stage for eventual passage of the National Trails System Act two years later, described NSTs as very special trails: “A standard of excellence in the routing, construction, maintenance, and marking consistent with each trail’s character and purpose should distinguish all national scenic trails. Each should stand out in its own right as a recreation resource of superlative quality and of physical challenge.” It is important that the collective effort of the many partners involved in this project maintains the Ice Age NST’s national significance and superlative qualities. The most basic way to accomplish this is to ensure that the trail is planned, established, and managed with a level of consistency over its entire length that conveys a sense of “connectedness” and continuity to the users. Quality design and construction of the trail, parking lots, and other facilities; clear and consistent signage, and timely response to problems created by storms or routine recreational use all help to maintain this consistency and foster pride in the trail. Regular cleanups of litter and a timely response to other public concerns about trail-related problems ensure that the trail will be a welcome addition to a community or area.

A. Development

Layout

The route of Ice Age NST generally follows the glacial features and moraines left by the Wisconsin Glaciation. The goal of those working on the trail and of Congress in authorizing the trail is that it be established within a permanently protected trailway corridor. The Ice Age NST will be designed to take advantage of the recreational, scenic, educational, and cultural opportunities present along this route. The route of the trail will minimize negative impacts on natural resources, cultural resources, the human environment, and adjacent land uses. Some basic principles that are used when laying out a route include:

- Traverse a variety of glacial features that are located in a visually pleasing corridor.
- Provide for a diverse user experience by incorporating a variety of plant communities, terrain, open and enclosed spaces (e.g. forests, savannas, prairies, etc.).

- Provide vistas to broader landscapes for scenic and interpretive purposes.
- Link and protect significant biological, archeological, and geological sites.
- Connect or provide linkages to communities and other trails for recreational, environmental, and/or user support purposes.
- Obtain local landowner and town support.
- Use publicly owned land for support facilities.

Construction/Maintenance of Trail and Trail-Related Structures

The Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), developed by the U.S. Forest Service, provides a framework for defining classes of outdoor recreation environments. These classes are useful guides for trail construction and management decisions. A modified form of the ROS reflecting the recreational environment of the Ice Age NST has been adopted, resulting in three broad categories of recreation settings—urban, rural/roaded natural and semi-primitive.

- **Urban** settings are characterized by substantially urbanized and modified natural environments. Large numbers of visitors may be present, both on-site and in adjoining areas. Sections of the Ice Age NST following sidewalks through towns or on highly developed linear parkways are described as “urban.”
- **Rural/Roaded Natural** settings are characterized by a more natural appearing environment with moderate evidence of human activity. Resource modification is evident but it is also harmonious with the natural environment. “Rural” settings are typically farmland or pastoral landscapes. “Roaded Natural” settings are mainly forested lands. Similar standards apply to trails being constructed through both types of settings. The majority of the Ice Age NST will pass through “Rural” and “Roaded Natural” areas including exurban and agricultural landscapes.
- **Semi-Primitive** settings are characterized by a predominately natural appearing environment of moderate to large size. Interaction between visitors is low and there is evidence of only minimal human activity. The Chequamegon National Forest and portions of the trail in Taylor and Lincoln Counties are the only places along the Ice Age NST route where the trail is planned through this type of setting.

Typically, before new trail is constructed, a site plan will be developed to guide the layout, design and maintenance of the trail and related structures. Design standards will reflect the ROS setting determination for the segment, resource considerations, and accessibility levels.

Crossing broad expanses of wetland will be avoided by careful trail planning. Where it is necessary to cross creeks, wetlands, and other seasonally wet areas, boardwalks and simple bridges will be used. Many proven designs using native material or treated timbers and boards can be found in the sources listed in Tools of the Trail: A Bibliography on Planning, Advocating, Designing, Building, Maintaining and Managing Trails Throughout America. In all instances, wetlands will be treated in accordance with NPS standards and guidelines and Wisconsin's Wetland Act. (See Impacts to Water Resources in Section 7 of this document).

Signing

The trail will be marked with 2 by 6-inch vertical yellow paint blazes or small plastic markers placed on trees or posts, facing the hiker coming from either direction. Small, 3 ½-inch Ice Age NST emblems will be placed where the trail crosses minor roads and at about half-mile intervals along the trail. Large, 9-inch Ice Age NST emblems will be placed at major trailheads and major road crossings. Primary trail access points should also have informational kiosks or signs with specific information about the adjacent trail segments. Regulatory signs will be posted as needed.

Support Facilities

Support facilities provide for hiker convenience, comfort and sanitation. These structures should be designed to harmonize with the surrounding environment and reflect the ROS determination for the trail segment. Whenever possible, parking and other support facilities will be provided in nearby communities but they may also be provided on county, state and federal lands.

B. Management

Recreational Uses

The 1983 *Comprehensive Plan for the Ice Age NST* states that the trail is primarily intended to be a hiking trail. Travel on foot is the one use that must be provided on all segments of the trail.

Although the trail is designed primarily as a hiking trail, other compatible recreational uses are encouraged (such as photography, birdwatching, and snowshoeing). In addition, the trail will accommodate ungroomed cross country skiing on segments that are designed and constructed for this use. In general, horses and bikes are not allowed on the trail except for those sections that follow State Rail-Trails (such as the Military Ridge, Ahnapee and Tuscobia). Also, occasional travel on or across the trail with motorized vehicles by the landowner or manager for the purpose of managing and using their land is permitted.

Sections of the Ice Age NST that pass through lands open to hunting (e.g. State Wildlife Areas) will remain open to hunting. Managing authorities may choose to discourage or prohibit non-hunting use of the trail during certain game seasons. On private lands, if a landowner grants permission for trail passage either informally or through permanent easement, hunting privileges are conveyed only if stated in the agreement. Other lands which are posted “closed” to hunting will remain closed after trail development.

The National Trails System Act specifies that National Scenic Trails may not be open to motorized use by the general public. However, the 1980 amendment authorizing the Ice Age NST also specified that segments could be open to snowmobiling, where it is deemed appropriate by the managing authority responsible for the segment and the Secretary of the Interior. Like horseback riding or bicycling, limited snowmobiling opportunities are available and these are located primarily on State Rail-Trails which are included as part of the Ice Age NST route.

Accessibility

The Ice Age NST will be designed to ensure that people with a wide range of ability levels have the opportunity to experience the significant resources that make this trail unique. At the same time, planners will strive to maintain the generally rustic character of a National Scenic Trail. To accomplish these goals, the trail will provide a range of opportunities to accommodate individuals who enjoy a challenge, as well as those who prefer easier, non-strenuous hiking.

Some segments of the trail will be fully accessible. These segments are designed to improve access for persons with mobility and vision impairments. They meet a number of specifications addressing width, passing space, surface, running slope, cross slope, edging, clear headroom, resting areas, signage and information points. Generally, these sites are usable without assistance. Multi-use trails near urban areas should be fully accessible, accommodating wheelchairs, strollers, and hikers of all abilities.

Some segments of the trail will be designed to provide a more challenging experience, while still accommodating use by individuals with disabilities. Facilities remain fully accessible, but the trail grades and surface materials may be more challenging to persons with limited mobility. Whenever possible, these segments are constructed “barrier-free” without possible impediments to movement (such as steps, waterbars, fords, stepping stones and narrow bridges). However, they offer a higher level of risk and challenge than is found in urban settings and some disabled users may need assistance.

Portions of the trail may not be accessible to people with disabilities. In some cases, the contours of the land or the natural surface of rocks present impediments which cannot be removed without causing major impacts on the environment or drastically altering the character of the trail. Other factors influencing decisions on accessibility include the protection of natural and cultural resources and the trail setting.

The Ice Age NST would provide all individuals, including individuals with disabilities, the opportunity to choose trails that provide different experiences and varying degrees of challenge and difficulty.

Law Enforcement

The Ice Age NST as a partnership endeavor, is a patchwork of ownership and managing authorities; no single entity owns and manages the entire trail. Since the WDNR is currently purchasing lands for the trail, over time they will likely own a large portion of the trailway. As lands come under their ownership, the WDNR may enter into agreements with local units of government or with the IATA for cooperative management of the trailway. State Conservation Officers have enforcement authority on all WDNR-owned lands.

Some trail segments will be on county or municipal lands and will be under the direct protection and enforcement of these local authorities. Additional trailway lands may be owned by the IATA, or may be on private lands under an easement or agreement with the IATA. Volunteers will monitor trail developed on private lands and will alert local law enforcement officials of any issues requiring their attention. The County Sheriff has jurisdiction over all lands in the county, including those used for the Ice Age NST. However, experience and research have shown that linear trails have few law enforcement problems.

The IATA stresses low impact trail use through signage, literature and public contact along the trail. Experience has shown that hikers leave very little litter and generally pack out what they pack in. Concentrations of litter normally occur near roads and other access points and are easy to monitor. If littering does occur, volunteers will clean it up during regularly scheduled trail maintenance.

