

Chapter 2

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

When Congress amended the National Trails System Act in 1980 to authorize establishment of the Ice Age Trail as a NST, it designated only a general route for the trail.

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the National Trails System Act (82 Stat. 919; 16 U.S.C. 1241), as amended, is further amended as follows:

(a)Section 5 (a) is amended by adding the following new paragraph at the end thereof:

(10) The Ice Age National Scenic Trail, a trail of approximately one thousand miles, extending from Door County, Wisconsin, to Interstate Park in Saint Croix County [should have read “Polk County”], Wisconsin, generally following the route described in “On the Trail of the Ice Age –A Hiker’s and Biker’s Guide to Wisconsin’s Ice Age National Scientific Reserve and Trail”, by Henry S. Reuss, Member of Congress, dated 1980.”

This general route identified for the trail across the state was then incorporated into the *1983 Comprehensive Plan For Management and Use of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (Comprehensive Plan)*. The maps in the plan frequently identify roads as “Connecting Road Segment to NST” where there was no actual “trail” in existence and no specific idea where an off-road trail could be established in the future. This alignment was displayed on the maps even though it was known that these road routes could not serve as the route of the Ice Age NST over the long-term. The *Comprehensive Plan* states that the Ice Age NST “should be a continuous overland (off-road) trail. The roads identified on the maps were “place holders” for a future alignment that would need to be determined through a detailed analysis. This planning work was identified as a priority action on page 50 of the *Comprehensive Plan*:

“1. Detailed planning for the location and construction of new trail segments needed to make the Ice Age NST a continuous off-road trail as identified in this plan should begin as soon as possible as a cooperative effort between the Ice Age Trail Council, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service.”

The purpose of the Corridor Planning Process is to identify and evaluate potential corridors where an overland route for the Ice Age NST could be established in southern Langlade County. (See Map 2-1) A desirable location for the trail would meet the following objectives.

- 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 (ex. Forests, meadows).
- Provide vistas to broader landscapes for scenic and interpretive purposes.
- Link and protect significant geologic, biologic, and archeological sites
- Link other significant natural resource areas.
- Connect or provide linkages to communities for user support purposes.

- If possible, use publicly-owned land for trail development and support facilities.

In the 1970s, extensive segments of the Ice Age Trail were established in Langlade County. At that time volunteers built 54 miles of trail from the northwest corner of Langlade County, at the Lincoln County line, to just northeast of the community of Polar. Here the trail follows the Parish and Almond moraines as they rise from the vast expanse of the Antigo Flats, a huge outwash plain to the west. As the trail winds in a semicircle southwest around the Antigo Flats, it is located primarily on county and private forest land. When the trail reaches its current terminus near Polar, land use patterns change. Here in the towns of Antigo, Polar, Rolling, and Norwood, land use consists primarily of private agricultural and residential lands, interspersed with small public state fishery areas. While national, state, and county owned lands (2004 UW-Extension make up 32 percent of the total land area in Langlade County, within the towns of Antigo, Polar, Rolling and Norwood, only two percent are in public ownership. To connect the existing segments of trail through this area, in 1983, the *Comprehensive Plan* identified a connecting road route that linked the trail north of Polar to the Dells of the Eau Claire County Park in Marathon County.

The purpose of the Langlade County Ice Age Trail Corridor Planning Process (CPP) is to identify and evaluate potential corridors where an overland route for the Ice Age NST could be established in order to complete the trail through Langlade County and connect it to the Marathon County line, a distance of approximately 20-25 miles. Concurrently, a CPP is also taking place in Marathon County that will link the Ice Age NST to the Dells of the Eau Claire County Park.

The project area for this CPP occurs within defined endpoints that are located in the south central portion of Langlade County. The northeastern boundary of this study area is in the town of Evergreen, Sections 6 & 7, northeast of Mueller Lake Park. The southwestern boundary is located at the Marathon County line in the town of Rolling. (See Map 2-2 and Map 2-3)

Today, Langlade County has a dedicated, self-sustaining, and enthusiastic group of volunteers who want to complete the trail county wide. A plan is needed that will provide guidance on where future trail segments could be established. Such a plan will help volunteers and other partners focus their efforts.

Locally, there is also a history of support for the Ice Age Trail. On July 9, 1974, the Langlade County Board of Supervisors passed Resolution No.36 approving the development of the trail through county property and encouraging private landowners to cooperate where it crosses their property. The Langlade County Forestry and Recreation Department has also been very enthusiastic about the Trail. They have incorporated the Ice Age Trail into their Outdoor Recreation Plans since 1974, and it has been included in subsequent updates through 2008. While Langlade County Parks Department may assist with the development of the trail and intends to promote the trail in its literature, its present stance is that current funding levels prevent it from being involved with day-to-day trail maintenance activities.

Map 2-1 State of Wisconsin w/Langlade County and Project Area

Map 2-2: Langlede County w/ existing Ice Age NST & public lands

Map 2-3: Lantlade County map with existing Ice Age NST 1983

