

NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL TRAILWAY PLAN

Analysis of Alternatives
and
Environmental Assessment
Columbiana and Carroll Counties, Ohio

Prepared by

National Park Service
Ice Age, North Country, and Lewis and Clark National Trails
Madison, Wisconsin

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Executive Summary

This document analyzes four alternatives, including the no action alternative, to the question of routing and developing the North Country National Scenic Trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties, Ohio.

In March 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). To date, Congress has authorized the establishment of eight National Scenic Trails--long distance, non motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas. National Scenic Trails are patterned after the renowned Appalachian NST.

Members of the North Country Trail Association in Columbiana and Carroll Counties invited the National Park Service to conduct a planning process to determine the route of the trail across the county. The members had spent several years seeking landowner permission and building support along the route following the old tow path for the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal as defined in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982*. A planning team was formed to investigate alternatives and conduct a public involvement process. Four alternatives plus the no action alternative resulted from the scoping and evaluation process (Attachments 6A, 6B, 6C, and 6D). The preferred alternative, Alternative 1, totals 60.5 miles across Columbiana and Carroll Counties (Attachment 7). Of this total, approximately 9.5 miles traverse public lands, 3 miles are on public sidewalks and/or greenways, and 48 miles cross private property.

Since there are many private holdings that the North Country NST must cross in both counties and because of the general philosophy and purpose of a NST, the planning team is recommending a trail for foot travel only. This would include such winter uses as snowshoeing, and limited, ungroomed cross-country skiing. Development of a low impact, foot travel only trail using the careful design and construction techniques discussed herein will result in only minimal impacts.

Locating and constructing a new trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties may produce both positive benefits and negative consequences. Negative impacts on the human environment are

generally limited to a perceived, slight increase in what are collectively called nuisance impacts. Adjoining landowners typically have fears about loss of privacy, vandalism, and littering when a new trail is being planned. Past experience and formal studies have shown these fears to be groundless as the perceived impacts do not develop after the trail is constructed. What trail users and neighboring landowners normally experience as the most important benefits of a trail are health, fitness, and recreation opportunities. Other advantages include aesthetic beauty, open space, natural resource protection, and in some instances, higher property resale values. Also, local communities may even experience bolstered economies and increased local pride. The new trail is predicted to have a minimum impact on the natural and cultural environments. These slight impacts are further discussed in Section VIII--Affected Environment and Impacts.

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I. Introduction and Background Information

In March 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). It is one of only eight trails authorized by Congress to be National Scenic Trails. Patterned after the renowned Appalachian Trail, NSTs are long distance, non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas.

In many ways, the North Country NST is similar in concept to the Appalachian NST. Yet in other ways, it is uniquely different as it takes the visitor through a diverse series of landscapes rather than following a mountain range. When completed, the North Country NST will extend approximately 3,200 miles from the vicinity of Crown Point, New York, to Lake Sakakawea State Park, on the Missouri River, in North Dakota (Attachment 1), where it joins the route of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Currently, more than 1,298 miles of the trail are in place and certified as meeting the standards of a NST. Another 800-1,000 miles, some of which are on roads, are walkable but not yet certified.

The National Park Service is responsible for overall administration of the North Country NST. Actual development and management of the trail are intended to be partnership ventures accomplished through many cooperating Federal, State, and local agencies, and private trail organizations. When viewed in this manner, it shows that the North Country NST is truly a cooperative endeavor.

When Congress established the trail, a very general route was delineated. A slightly more refined, but still general route was shown in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982* which envisioned approximately 60 miles of the trail route passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties in East Central Ohio from Negley to Minerva (Attachment 3).

Currently, approximately 6.3 miles of the trail exist within Beaver Creek State Park (S.P.) where portions of the Vondergreen and Dogwood Trails were certified as North Country Trail in 1983. The balance of the route across both counties is located primarily on private property and has not yet been developed. The purpose of this plan is to identify a specific corridor within which a permanent trail can be established, and thereby guide agencies and private volunteer organizations to secure a route for the trail.

II. Purpose of the Environmental Assessment

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires consideration of the environmental effects of proposed Federal actions, in this case the National Park Service's proposal to select a specific alignment for a North Country NST route across Columbiana and Carroll Counties.

This assessment serves to:

- A. Comply with all provisions regarding environmental considerations and public involvement required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by carrying out an open, public planning process to determine the ideal location for the trail and to identify and address public issues and concerns.
- B. Comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- C. Comply with consultation requirements established in the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- D. Comply with Executive Order 11988--Floodplain Management and Executive Order 11990--Protection of Wetlands.
- E. Provide information on the physical and social environment through which the trail passes for the local trail clubs and the counties to use as they plan the physical location, construction, and subsequent maintenance of the trail.
- F. Foster public involvement in developing and managing the trail, including recognition and possibly adoption of the trail by public and private land use planning groups.

III. Description of Columbiana and Carroll Counties, and Their Vicinity

Columbiana and Carroll Counties are located in the east-central portion of Ohio within a one hundred and twenty-mile radius of Canton, Akron, Cleveland, Columbus; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Wheeling, West Virginia (Attachment 2). Both counties are predominantly rural with small communities scattered throughout the area. The vast majority of land within the unincorporated portions of both counties is used either partially or totally for agricultural purposes, as cropland, fallow fields, or forest.

Columbiana County is 535 square miles. The population is approximately 108,276. Although the county is one of Ohio's oldest, it remains basically rural with its largest city being East Liverpool with 16,700 residents. The central portion of the county, where the trail route is mainly located, is crossed by a terminal moraine created by the Grand River Lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier, and embraces parts or all of West, Hanover, Center, Elkrun, and Middleton Townships. The lower slopes of the hills are moderately steep, but the upper slopes are more gentle. The ice invasion had a general smoothing influence, as many hills have broad flat ridges projecting from them.

The Sandy and Beaver Canal opened in 1846. It started at the mouth of Little Beaver Creek where it enters the Ohio River, and extended 73 miles through Lisbon to Bolivar where it joined the Ohio-Erie Canal. It was the only privately developed canal in Ohio. Today, the canal towpath

is a prime pathway for the North Country NST to follow. Structural remnants such as lock foundations from the canal days still remain, and provide a visible history of yesteryear.

Much of Columbiana County is drained through Little Beaver Creek and it branches into the Ohio River, while the western portion is drained by Sandy Creek, which flows westward into the Tuscarawas River. Local area parks include Beaver Creek S.P., Guilford Lake S.P., and Scenic Vista County Park.

Carroll County is 389 square miles. The population is approximately 26,530. Carroll County is home to some of the largest tree farms in the state, and it is the #1 producer of Christmas trees in Ohio. The highest point of elevation is 1,380 feet with many rolling hills as part of a rural landscape. The historical Great Trail (also known as the Tuscarawas Trail) traverses the area between Pittsburgh, PA and Chillicothe, OH--near the proposed NCT route. Originally, the Great Trail was established by Native American woodland tribes traveling to take advantage of seasonal hunting opportunities. Later in history, a religious sect walked the trail to indoctrinate the tribes with Christian beliefs, and various military officials and troops traveled on the trail during the Revolutionary War. Today, only a few historical markers mark the location.

The vegetation in both counties is similar to much of the rest of Ohio. The basic forest present in the trail corridor is the combination of the beech-maple and oak-hickory associations--composed of beech, maple, white ash, elm and hickory on poorly drained soils with black, white, and red oaks predominating on better drained shallow soils. In the gorges, hemlock and eastern white pine are found mixed with the dominant beech and maple. In the areas where selective cutting and planting have occurred there is a larger percentage of yellow poplar, white ash, black locust, and black cherry. As more farmland became abandoned at the turn of the century, this idle land began reverting to forest. The main highways near the trail corridor are US 30, SR11, and SR14.

The specific location of the North Country NST Corridor in eastern Ohio is:

Counties: Columbiana and Carroll

Cities and Towns: Negley, Anchor, Fredericktown, Elkton, Jordanville, Lisbon, Hanoverton, Kensington, and Minerva

Townships: Middleton - T7N, R1W Sections 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36
St. Clair - T6N, R1W Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11
Elkrun - T11N, R2W Sections 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36
Center - T14N, R3W Sections 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24
Hanover - T15N, R4W Sections 13, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36
West - T16N, R5W Sections 32, 33, 34, 35, 36
Augusta - T15N, R5W Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Brown - T16N, R6W Sections 10, 13, 14, 15

IV. Planning Background in Columbiana and Carroll Counties

A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FES 75-85 dated October 3, 1975) was prepared by the former Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. This FES titled *The North Country Trail--A Potential Addition to the National Trails System* shows the trail passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties and describes a very general route on page 41 of the FES.

As mentioned in Section I, *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982* also indicates the trail route as passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties (Attachment 3). In this area of Ohio, the plan identifies the route of the trail as generally following the old Sandy and Beaver Canal's outstanding historic features.

Between 1982 and 1992, little work was done to place the trail on the ground. Beginning in the late 1980's, local members of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) spent several years seeking landowner permission and building support along the route following the old tow path for the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal. However, there were areas of uncertainty. Therefore, in 1992 a core planning team, composed of key agencies and trail interest groups, was formed. This team met periodically and focused their efforts on trying to identify feasible alternate routes through Columbiana and Carroll Counties, and/or to validate the old canal as the primary corridor of opportunity. As it turned out, the preferred corridor, with only minor exceptions, is nearly identical to the one identified in the original North Country Trail Feasibility Study and much of it was already the subject of an Environmental Impact Statement process.

V. Implementation of the Planning Process

In October of 1992, a planning team composed of representatives of the NPS-Madison Trails Office, NPS-Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), NCTA, Buckeye Trail Association (BTA), and Beaver Creek S.P. initiated a comprehensive planning process for the North Country NST in Columbiana and Carroll Counties. The purpose of this process was to determine the ideal location for the trail, and comply with Federal and State environmental laws.

Each planning team member was asked to provide a list of goals and objectives for the North Country Trail in Columbiana and Carroll Counties. The following list was the National Park Service's Goals and Objectives.

The selected route should provide:

- Scenic locations in a nationally significant context.
- Non- motorized experiences such as hiking and walking.

- A long term permanency for the trail by selecting the best route instead of a short term solution on a less desirable route.
- Connections between scenic areas, points of interest, historically significant areas, and/or other trails.
- Periodic hiker amenities such as camping in permissible areas, water sources, and intermittent resupply opportunities.
- Certifiable segments--not on the road.
- Identification of the local managing authority.
- A legally defensible location that meets the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requirements.
- Utilization of public lands and larger tracts of private lands whenever possible to reduce the number of potential conflicts.
- A broad base of community awareness and support for the trail.

The planning team then met to combine the above list with the goals and objectives of the other planning team members. After finding commonality, clarifying, adding, and subtracting, they arrived at a total of 17 combined goals/objectives. The following list was the Planning Team's Goals and Objectives for the North Country NST in East-Central Ohio.

The selected route should:

- A. Have the least impacts on wetlands and endangered resources.
- B. Maintain a regional identity.
- C. Utilize the most scenic lands.
- D. Incorporate natural features and areas.
- E. Utilize public lands and large tracts of private land.
- F. Connect with other trails to be part of a larger trail system.
- G. Connect recreation facilities.
- H. Incorporate hiker facilities, access, and amenities.

- I. Have preference for hiking and walking over other uses.
- J. Be supported by the public.
- K. Achieve long-term permanency with easements, managing authorities, and public lands.
- L. Be sensitive to scenic river designation.
- M. Link recreation and historical sites.
- N. Connect or incorporate communities.
- O. Separate different trail uses.
- P. Incorporate economic considerations.
- Q. Provide for multiple uses.

These compiled goals and objectives then assisted the team as they created a criteria prioritization matrix (Attachment 4). The finalized criteria listed in descending order of importance along with their relative weights was:

- L. Be sensitive to scenic river designation - **120**
- A. Have the least impacts on wetlands and endangered resources - **105**
- K. Achieve long-term permanency with easements, managing authorities, and public lands - **81**
- J. Be supported by the public - **60**
- D. Incorporate natural features and areas - **45**
- F. Connect with other trails to be part of a larger trail system - **36**
- E. Utilize public lands and large tracts of private land - **36**
- C. Utilize the most scenic lands - **35**
- H. Incorporate hiker facilities, access, and amenities - **35**

- I. Have preference for hiking and walking over other uses - 27
- G. Connect recreation facilities - 22
- M. Link recreation and historical sites - 21
- P. Incorporate economic considerations - 16
- O. Separate different trail uses - 12
- N. Connect or incorporate communities - 7
- Q. Provide for multiple uses - 2
- B. Maintain a regional identity - 2

By using this process, the team confirmed that the route following the old tow path for the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal, should be the favored primary corridor of opportunity. Four alternatives were also identified as potential trail routes. As mentioned before, this corridor with only minor exceptions, is nearly identical to the one identified in the original North Country Trail Feasibility Study. The entire planning process sequence of events is shown as Attachment 5.

VI. Description of the Proposed Corridor and Alternatives

Generally, four alternatives (Attachments 6A, 6B, 6C, and 6D) resulted from the scoping and evaluation process described in Section V. A description of the four alternatives and a no action alternative is presented in this section.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 enters the county near Negley (Attachment 6A). It is anticipated that the trail corridor will exit Pennsylvania from somewhere within Pennsylvania State Game Lands #520 and enter Ohio running southwesterly through currently active, but eventually reclaimed, strip-mining properties belonging to Stateline Resources, Inc. At some point in time, all of the mining property that the trail passes through will be reclaimed to a semi-natural state through regrading and revegetating with grass and/or trees. On the western side of Stateline Resources property, the route reaches the abandoned Youngstown and Southern (Y&S) Railroad ROW about two miles south of Negley. The Y&S parallels the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek, a National and State Scenic River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The proposed trail follows the Y&S south to Fredericktown. Just north of Fredericktown, some portions of the Y&S grade pass through lands which are classified by ODNR as Natural Area Preserves. Recreationists may not leave the trail in the Natural Area Preserves without an ODNR permit (See Attachment 10). At

Fredericktown, the trail leaves the railroad ROW, and crosses to the west side of the North Fork on an historic iron bridge that also carries Fredericktown Road. The route then passes through Fredericktown, a small community interspersed with historic structures. No lodging or resupply services are available.

Approximately 4,500 acres of land surrounding Fredericktown is owned by the Vodrey Trust. These lands were purchased by William H. Vodrey (1873-1954), and contain many of the areas most scenic spots. Recognizing the beauty of the area and the threat of development, the Vodrey Trust was established to preserve the area for future generations. Prior to entering Fredericktown, a short side hike to the east on Fredericktown Road leads to Cynthia's Overlook, a spot that provides spectacular views of the Little Beaver Creek valley as it heads south toward the Ohio River. Another short side trip, upstream on the west side of the creek, leads to a relocated covered bridge, a suspension bridge across the North Fork, and water sculpted basins called the Tubs. A special permit must be obtained from the Vodrey Trust prior to entering the "Tubs" area.

At the west edge of Fredericktown, the route heads west and climbs a steep hill. From the top there are outstanding views of the Little Beaver Creek valley. The route then continues on the north side of Little Beaver Creek to the mouth of Rough Run. At places, it is on top of the steep hills adjoining the creek. In other places, it is on the sidehill facing the creek. In the northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 3, St. Clair Township, it must pass close to the most heavily developed part of the Vodrey Trust lands known as Beaverkettle Farms. There is current opposition to passing through the Vodrey Trust property. The large size of the Vodrey Trust property makes this an obstacle worthy of consideration and will be discussed further in Section VII-Analysis of Alternatives. At the mouth of Rough Run, long switchbacks and sidehill construction will be utilized to climb the steep hill and reach a $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ mile spur trail leading to the Horseman's Camp--in Little Beaver Creek State Park.

The Horseman's Camp serves as a water source and offers outhouse facilities. Camping is also available, but is not very desirable for hikers since there is heavy horse activity resulting in interspersed manure piles. Beyond the campground spur trail, volunteers have already roughed out a hiking trail that utilizes a series of switchbacks to descend the steep hill to the east. At the bottom of the hill, there is an easy walk around the edge of an old field and through the woods along Little Beaver Creek bringing the hiker to the former town of Sprucevale. Only Hambleton's Mill, the mill keeper's house, and a state park picnic ground currently occupy the former townsite.

The restored Hambleton's Mill was originally built in 1813. The stone structure is closed to the public for safety reasons but the image of how the water used to be diverted to the mill's undershot raceway easily reappears. Across the road from the mill is a state park picnic area. Presently, the park does not allow camping, and there is no potable water available at this site. It is possible that the pump can be repaired in the future. Starting from the bottom of the hill near the Horseman's Camp to Sprucevale, the trail route is within the Scenic River corridor.

After passing the mill in Sprucevale, the next seven miles of the North Country Trail within Beaver Creek S.P., are already in place. Portions of the Vondergreen and Dogwood Trails were certified as North Country Trail in 1983. This trail segment from Sprucevale to the Family Campground, located on Leslie Road (also known as Williamsport Church Road), does not need to be studied since it is already in place and certified. However, much of this stretch is within the scenic river corridor, and any trail improvements must meet considerations established in Section IX--Trail Use, Development, and Management Considerations.

Upon leaving the Family Campground, the corridor continues west in Beaver Creek S.P. along the Pine Ridge Trail. The route leaves the S.P. at Section 31, Middleton Township, through a fence stile constructed in 1994, and passes through private property for almost 2 miles. Along this 2-mile stretch, the route drops down over a hill through abandoned strip-mine mounds, and reaches open fields. It passes along the back sides of these open fields, and near the site of three rustic crosses--a local landmark. After crossing Carlisle Road, the route climbs and encircles a high hill before descending near the Highway 7 and Highway 419 (Middle Beaver Road) junction. Passing under the bridge supporting Highway 419, and through a small private campground, the route again follows the old Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath. The towpath (and the route) is on the northeast side of the Middle Fork Little Beaver Creek at the base of a cliff that separates the trail environment from the developed agricultural lands above.

The route enters the western unit of Beaver Creek S.P. along this section of the towpath, and passes Lusk Lock. This structure offers a unique opportunity to see the intact, well-preserved stonework of one of the old canal locks. The route continues along the towpath to Elkton, mostly within the western unit of Beaver Creek S.P.. The intact towpath offers a pleasant hiking experience allowing views of the creek on the left and the bluff on the right. An unusual presence in this area is the Eastern Hemlock growing in the shaded microclimate at the base of the bluff. The trail route is within the Scenic River corridor of Little Beaver Creek the entire length from Highway 7 to Elkton.

At Elkton, the corridor crosses to the south side of Little Beaver Creek via the Elkton Road Bridge. Before crossing the creek, the hiker is given the option to hike about ¼ mile west on Highway 154 to Lock 26 Restaurant that offers refreshments and dining. This restaurant is the first opportunity to purchase a meal since before crossing into Ohio from Pennsylvania. Once across to the south side of the creek on the Elkton Road Bridge, the trail turns west past the Elkton School and through a strip-mining area paralleling the Middle Fork of Little Beaver Creek.

Near the southwest corner of Section 21, Elkrun Township--Southwest, the trail begins a long loop to the south to potentially cross Highway 11 near Cream Ridge Road. Initially, the route passes through reforested strip-mined areas that run parallel to Highway 11. On its way south, it intertwines through a series of narrow wooded strips between a pasture and hay fields. The route turns west, and runs parallel to and south of Cream Ridge Road for approximately ½ mile. The route then turns northwest through private properties, and continues west following portions of a long, abandoned railroad grade toward Highway 45 at Lisbon. Segments of this old grade may still be in public ownership with confirmation pending further research. Before reaching Highway

45, homes in the outskirts of Lisbon are encountered, and an ideal off-road route has yet to be identified. Currently, this last ¼-½ mile of the route to Highway 45 follows Ganders Flat Road.

The Highway 45 bridge is used to recross to the north side of Little Beaver Creek and to enter the city of Lisbon, the Columbiana County seat. The route passes through Lisbon following the sidewalk along the north side of Highway 45/30--Lisbon's main street. Lisbon is one of the oldest towns in Ohio, so the route passes many historic buildings and homes. Lisbon offers the first opportunity to restock hiking supplies since entering Columbiana County. There are also a few small restaurants offering items such as pizza and ice cream.

Upon departing Lisbon, the route leaves the Highway 45/30 sidewalk and turns northwest along the abandoned Erie-Lackawanna Railroad grade. Efforts are currently underway to develop this grade as a multi-use trail greenway called the Leetonia-Lisbon Greenway. This abandoned rail corridor passes through a small city park (Lisbon), and the route follows it northwesterly for about one mile to Furnace Road. Here, the route turns west utilizing the Furnace Road Bridge, and enters property belonging to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA).

At the western edge of the BSA camp, the route passes to the south side of Furnace Road and turns west along a wooded sidehill area just south of the old canal route. Along this hillside are the remnants of a series of nine locks that were used to lift the barges over the hill. Some of the remnants remain visible, but are not as well preserved as Lusk Lock. Near the top of the hill, the route turns south along wooded fencerows and again approaches Highway 30.

Turning west, parallel to Highway 30, it passes the highway maintenance garage. It then turns northwest along wooded fencerows, small woodlots, and a short stretch of the canal before reaching county owned property. Passing near the county rest home and county incarceration facility, the route heads west for about 3 miles where it rejoins the Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath along the West Fork Little Beaver Creek--near the middle of Section 13, Hanover Township--Northeast.

Along this section paralleling the creek, the towpath is well defined. Surprisingly, a fair portion of the canal is elevated above the creek at the mid-slope of the hill. For the most part, the towpath/trail route is wooded. South of Highway 30, the towpath/trail passes through Li'l Beaver Campground, a private campground providing campsites and a small camp store. Turning west near Laughlin Mill Road, the route leaves the West Fork and follows the route of the old Sandy and Beaver Canal on its way to the Little Tunnel (900 feet in length) site. Beyond the Little Tunnel, the trail route follows the towpath south through the small community of Dungannon.

West of Dungannon, the trail follows the general route of the old canal, but the towpath no longer exists. Here, the trail follows fencerows and small wooded areas. Prior to reaching Hanoverton, the route passes the Big Tunnel (1,300 feet in length) site where the route is located directly above the tunnel. While neither of the tunnels is open, collapsed entrances and short portions of the canal remain visible.

On the eastern outskirts of Hanoverton, the trail recrosses SR 30. In Hanoverton, the trail follows narrow streets and sidewalks. The hiker passes immediately adjacent to the restored Spread Eagle Tavern, a venerable inn constructed in 1837 and on the National Register of Historic Places. Interior historical photos and tile murals provide local canal information, and overnight accommodations are available. At the northwest corner of the Spread Eagle Tavern, the route turns south along historic Plymouth Street where a number of buildings built in the 1800's, are on the National Register of Historic Places. Some of these buildings served as part of the Underground Railroad. Turning west, the trail passes through the local cemetery where the old headstones portray the life stories of past generations. From Hanoverton to the west terminus of the proposed corridor, the trail route no longer is associated with or follows the Sandy and Beaver Canal.

Leaving the cemetery and continuing west, the route crosses fields, small woods, and a Christmas tree farm on Mobley Road. At the northeast corner of section 30, Hanover Township--Southwest, the route turns south and crosses a hill to reach Campbell Road. Before reaching Campbell Road, it skirts a trailer home and a small pond. At Campbell Road, it follows the road to the east for about 200 feet to reach the north end of an access road to Sandy Springs Cemetery, only ¼ mile away. South of the cemetery, the route continues south on abandoned Township Road 2058 to Highway 30.

In Kensington, a short stretch of highway shoulder is utilized to cross under the Conrail Railroad. Immediately south of the Conrail underpass, the corridor turns west and follows a Conrail service road south of the railroad bed to reach Myers Road. It is anticipated that an agreement can be reached with Conrail to gate this service road.

The area between Meyers Road and Minerva presents many planning challenges. This stretch contains a high percentage of open, agricultural areas so the trail has to maneuver its way through a series of fence rows and small woodlots whenever they are available. At Meyers Road, the proposed route turns south paralleling the road for a short stretch before leaving the road to pass southwest through the wooded edges of a strip-mining area. It heads west paralleling Ridge Road, and crosses Lynchburg Road and Lippincott Road to a wooded area before crossing Quaker Church Road. Once across Quaker Church Road, the route heads south crossing Ridge Road, and enters a fairly large forested area near Camp Christopher. The route then swings west crossing Bellflower Road at a small stand of White Pine. Curving northwest to once again parallel Ridge Road, the trail passes directly through the Great Trail Golf Course, owned by a trail supporter. Just beyond the golf course, the trail route crosses Highway 14 and the Penn Central Railroad. The trail then crosses Still Fork on Magnet Road and continues on the road for approximately ¼ mile. It then climbs to the top of a hill on the north side of the road to get back into the woods. This area is particularly tight due to the close proximity of a couple of homes. Since the homes are at the bottom of the slope, screening is provided by remaining on top of the slope behind a stand of pine and mixed hardwoods. The route remains in the wooded areas the majority of the time as it heads west and crosses the extreme northern property line of the Great Trails Girl Scout Camp's property. Beyond the Girl Scout property, the trail passes through more private property by following a series of fencerows, and then enters a woodlot. The route crosses

Linden Road following along a line of young Christmas trees before crossing the last wooded hillside, and dropping down to Highway 183 where a small parking area at the Highway 183 and Linden Road junction exists. This parking lot could potentially serve as a trailhead.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 is identical to Alternative 1 except between Pancake-Clarkson Road at the northeast 1/4 of section 26, Middleton Township--Southeast and the Horseman's Camp in Beaver Creek S.P. near the center of Section 4, St. Clair Township (Attachment 6B).

While Alternative 1 continues south on the old Y&S Railroad in the direction of Fredericktown, Alternative 2 leaves the Y&S ROW at Pancake-Clarkson Road and crosses the existing road bridge to the west side of the North Fork Little Beaver Creek. Once across the creek, the trail route makes a long climb in a southwesterly direction, and then turns west. The route remains primarily in the woods except for when it crosses Highway 170. The route turns south on the eastern edge of Section 28, Middleton Township--Southwest, 1/2 mile west of Highway 170, and passes through a new community development called the Hart-Bow Ranch. Eight-foot wide trail corridors along the east and west sides of the development have been touted as one of the amenities offered to the potential home buyers. It is anticipated that the North Country Trail can use one of these corridors. Beyond Hart-Bow Ranch, the route loops along the south rim of Rough Run and reaches the Horseman's Camp in Beaver Creek S.P. From this point to the trail's western terminus, Alternative 2 follows the same route as Alternative 1.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 is identical to Alternative 1 except between the strip-mining area paralleling the Middle Fork of Little Beaver Creek at the southwest corner of section 21, Elkrun Township--Southwest and one mile east of Lisbon near the center of section 19, Elkrun Township--Southwest (Attachment 6C).

Beginning near the southwest corner of Section 21, Elkrun Township, Alternative 3 proceeds west. It generally stays in the creek bottom and eventually reaches State Highway 11. This alternative route gets past Highway 11 by passing under the bridge that carries the highway across the Middle Fork.

Immediately after passing under Highway 11 (at the bridge) the proposed route squeezes through a narrow area between the creek and a home with outlying piles of various materials. It then climbs a steep sidehill on the south side of Gander Flats Road and continues west, parallel to the road. About one mile east of Lisbon, it again becomes identical to Alternative 1.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 is identical to Alternative 1 except that the variations described in Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 are both incorporated (Attachment 6D).

Alternative 5 - No Action

Under this alternative, efforts to construct and maintain a segment of the North Country NST across Columbiana and Carroll Counties are not initiated in any organized fashion. Any efforts by local trail organizers are likely to be sporadic and disjointed. The resulting trail route might merely follow the path of least resistance rather than carry out the intent of Congress that a National Scenic Trail is exemplary of the highly scenic and natural areas of the nation. Achieving a continuous, scenic trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties through this alternative is more by accident than through planned actions. The NPS would take no direct action to establish and administer the trail other than limited technical assistance to volunteers.

It should be noted that except for where the corridor is well defined by the presence of the Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath, the corridor is at least one mile in width to provide for flexibility in routing the trail.

VII. Analysis of Alternatives

The four alternative alignments and the no action alternative were reviewed in terms of their relative feasibility and desirability. Public response to the proposed trail routes was received at the open house meetings in Lisbon and Minerva on July 17-18, 1995. Review of the public response contributed to the following analysis. The conclusion was that Alternative 1 is the Preferred Alternative. Public input from the open houses resulted in a few improvements to the proposed trail routes as they were described in Section VI. The preferred trail alignment is graphically depicted on Attachment 7.

Alternative 1 (PREFERRED)

The primary reason for studying and favoring this alternative is that much of this route follows the old tow path of the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal and for the most part, it is also the route shown in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982*. Existing portions of the towpath provide a ready-made trail. Only relatively minor amounts of clearing of brush, small trees, and logs are required to open the passage. Since the towpath was engineered to allow mules to pull the canal boats; it is level and firm, and major excavation for the trail is not required. Any breaks in the towpath caused by side streams can be easily bridged. Following the canal towpath allows for many opportunities to interpret the towpath's historical/cultural significance.

Alternative 1 passes through some of the most scenic areas of Columbiana County. Significant stretches are within the Scenic River corridor along the North Fork, the Main Stem, and the Middle Fork of Little Beaver Creek. Steep, forested hills adjoin the creek to create outstanding views and interesting hiking experiences. The flowing creek offers a relaxing atmosphere, opportunities to observe wildlife, and possible sources of treatable water. Rock formations at the base of stream side bluffs and along the trail are visually and geologically intriguing. A variety of

trees, shrubs, and forbs growing in the cool microclimate along the streams invite hikers to challenge their identification skills. The primary route offers exposure to a vast amount of environmental experiences including canal remnants, rural landscapes, rivers, lakes, steep riverine hills, agricultural fields, tree farms, mined lands, woodlands, rolling hills, and wooded fencerows.

Another reason that Alternative 1 is preferred is that local NCTA members had already spent years cultivating the good will of landowners along this general route. Many landowners had already verbally agreed to allow trail passage before the planning process began. In addition, no other major alternatives across the county were deemed feasible during the scoping and early planning team meetings. It purposely passes through the least developed areas of both Columbiana and Carroll Counties. In Carroll County, the corridor was selected because it provided a feasible trail alignment that avoids most homes and developments. Upon encountering homes, the route utilizes woodlots and fencerows at the back sides of the properties to avoid infringing on the landowners. Throughout the planning process, it was also important to connect with the existing seven mile certified segment of the North Country Trail in Beaver Creek S.P.. This alternative provides for that connection and more by linking the S.P.'s recreation facilities with other private campgrounds, such as the Li'l Beaver Campground on Trinity Church Road. Plus, the essentially abandoned Y&S railroad grade is put to use for several miles. Like the canal towpath, this old grade is a ready-made trail providing a long, linear stretch, owned by one landowner.

After public input and further planning, one route change and a few short alternate routes (not alternative routes) were identified within Alternative 1. The alternate routes (A, B, and C) are intended to serve as long-term temporary solutions to get past current obstacles within the preferred route.

Route Change and Alternate Route A

The original route, presented at the open houses, crossed to the south side of Little Beaver Creek, via the Highway 170 bridge, at Fredericktown. It remained on the south side of the creek until it reached Sprucevale where it recrossed to the north side via the Sprucevale Road (Highway 428) bridge. This "south of Little Beaver Creek" route was seriously considered by the planning team due to the urging of the Vodrey Trust and their concern for passing through the Vodrey properties directly west of Fredericktown (north of the creek). The large size of the Vodrey Trust properties made the investigation of other routes worthwhile.

Once gaining access to the south side of the creek, the corridor ran in a northwesterly direction along the creek's steep sidehill and rim. Approaching the mouth of Longs Run, the route continued south on top of the eastern rim of Longs Run and squeezed between the rim and a rural subdivision located in the southeast ¼ of section 10, St. Clair Township. Shortly after passing the subdivision, the route turned back to the northwest and negotiated the crossing of Longs Run through a series of switchbacks, and perhaps even steps. Longs Run is an integral part of the watershed, and its canyon is steep and deep. Across Longs Run, the

route gained access to lands within Beaver Creek S.P., and eventually descended the hill to the Sprucevale Road bridge where it re-crossed Little Beaver Creek at Sprucevale.

The decision to remain north of Little Beaver Creek offers terrain that is more favorable to trail construction, excellent scenic vistas from the high hills, and the avoidance of large bridge construction. The fact that the unspoiled beauty of the areas that are now the Vodrey Trust lands still remains, is a tribute to the vision of William H. Vodrey and subsequent generations of the family. These same scenic and natural attributes also make the routing change across the property highly desirable. In addition to the scenic attributes, it is almost always preferred to attempt to route a National Scenic Trail through areas of large ownership where there are fewer owners to negotiate with, less developments and infringements to the trail, and the possibility of a more remote trail experience. It is unknown if the lands will remain in the Vodrey Trust forever or if they may eventually be acquired by the State of Ohio. It is known that the State is interested in acquisition. Either way, it is hoped that whoever owns the land will eventually agree to allow trail passage. This route change is the most desirable (even though it may not be available for many years) especially since it may eventually be public land. The trail corridor is now expanded to include more of the Vodrey Trust lands, and the new trail alignment is described in Section VI - Alternative 1.

While the paragraph above shows the positive aspects to this route change, there are a couple of drawbacks. First, the corridor had to be expanded to include more of the Vodrey Trust properties. Secondly, there may be a long wait for the trail to be installed since the Vodrey Trust may remain unwilling to allow trail passage, and it may take years for the State of Ohio to purchase land within these properties. Even so, this route change remains the most conducive to the National Scenic Trail ideal.

While Alternative 1 is the long-term preferred route, Alternative 2 is suggested to serve as the first long-term temporary alternate, Alternate A. In order to allow time for negotiations and to avoid unnecessary trail construction efforts, it is suggested that volunteers focus their efforts in other parts of the two counties leaving this portion for a later date, or the combination of Alternative 1 and Alternate A could offer a loop trail experience. State of Ohio and volunteer efforts should continue to strive for approval for the preferred alignment from the Vodrey Trust.

Alternate Route B

The second alternate route is west of Beaver Creek S.P. Even though the route along the towpath in the southwestern corner of Section 25, Elkrun Township, is still the preferred route, the current landowners are adamantly opposed to the trail crossing their property. With the high probability of the trail soon existing on either side of this property; an alternate route following northwesterly along Middle Beaver Road, and then turning south along the eastern edge of Section 26, Elkrun Township, is suggested as a temporary solution until permission may be granted.

Alternate Route C

The third alternate route was identified because US 30 from Canton to SR11 near Lisbon is currently being considered for relocation. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is expected to choose one of the three alignments being considered in the spring of 1996 (Attachment 8). Varying portions of all three alignments of the US 30 reroute could potentially serve as barriers to the preferred trail route. ODOT Alignment A crosses the trail route three times--once east of Hanoverton and the other two times east of Lisbon. Alignment B crosses the trail route four times between Minerva and Hanoverton. Alignment C crosses the trail route twice--both times south of Minerva. Since ODOT has not identified the preferred alignment at this time, its effect on the final trail alignment is unknown. ODOT has been asked to keep the National Park Service involved as detailed construction maps and plans are developed so that provisions for hikers to pass under or over the highway are incorporated into their plans. ODOT will be working with the National Park Service on provisions for hikers to pass under or over the highway.

When ODOT identifies their preferred alternative, some adjustments in the trail route (not the corridor) may have to be made. If US 30 Alignment A occurs, the opportunity to cross Highway 11 near Cream Ridge Road will remain. If US 30 Alignment A does not occur, then Alternate Route C has been identified farther south near Roller Coaster Road.

Upon approaching Roller Coaster Road, there is a concentration of homes that must be negotiated. The route turns northwest, and is on Roller Coaster Road for approximately ½ mile. After passing along the edge of the fields next to the road, the route heads back through reforested strip mines and steep hills. It continues northwest through private properties and connects with the preferred alternative.

If US 30 Alignment A is not selected, then there will be no other choice but to cross at Roller Coaster Road. Every effort will be made to work with the landowners to identify an acceptable route and to minimize any impact to nearby homes.

Summary of the Preferred Alternative

A main concern with Alternative 1 is the long stretches of private land to cross, and the fact that completion of the trail is heavily dependent on the voluntary cooperation of the landowners. The National Park Service has no authority to purchase either fee simple lands or easements for the North Country NST. The North Country Trail Association could purchase lands or easements if funds were available, but only on a willing seller basis. Because of these restrictions, the support of the general public and especially of the landowners is crucial. During the last several years, the local NCTA members have sought landowner permission and built support along Alternative 1. Even with these important efforts, a completed trail following this corridor will be many years in the making.

The preferred alternative is Alternative 1 for a total of 60.5 miles across Columbiana and Carroll

Counties. Of this total, approximately 9.5 miles traverse public lands, 3 miles are on public sidewalks and/or greenways, and 48 miles cross private property.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 became a discussed option mainly to provide a northern bypass of the Vodrey Trust properties directly north of Little Beaver Creek and west of Fredericktown. Obtaining permission to cross Trust lands was seen by local planning team members as a virtually impossible task. Alternative 2 provides a feasible way to reach Beaver Creek S.P. while remaining predominantly in wooded areas.

Through public comments, this route only had a few minor shifts all dealing with landowner requests for allowing the trail on their properties if the route could be farther away from homes and other structures. These requests were made without any negative consequence to the general overall character to the trail.

One public commentator suggested that the final trail alignment should follow an existing horse trail along Rough Run to its mouth and then along the main stem of Little Beaver Creek to Sprucevale. Portions of this horse trail were walked to determine its feasibility. In many places, horse use had destroyed the trail for enjoyable hiking. It was wide and there were many locations where deep mud was present. These trail conditions confirmed NPS' belief that horses and hikers are incompatible in much of the eastern United States, and this suggestion was dropped from further consideration.

The major drawback to Alternative 2 is that it basically does not offer as many scenic opportunities as the preferred alternative. It passes through a mix of agricultural and wooded landscapes, and is closer to homes and a developing rural subdivision. There are many more road crossings. While Alternative 2 may provide a short/intermediate-term solution; in the long-term, Alternative 2 would not be the best representation of a national scenic trail in comparison to Alternative 1.

Alternative 3

As mentioned in Section VI, crossing Highway 11 is an obstacle for trail passage. Originally, it was thought that a trail alignment would pass under the bridge near the water's edge. NCTA volunteers and the NPS would work through ODOT to construct a trail abutment that would be supported by the bridge piers allowing for flat trail passage under the bridge. Unfortunately, there is a vertical bluff that drops to the water's edge immediately upstream from the bridge. Even if a trail existed under the bridge, it would be impossible to get past the bluff.

The next option explored was to still have the trail pass under the bridge, but this time it would remain immediately adjacent to the south abutment. Enough head room existed under the bridge for passage along this abutment by staying on top of the cliff. Since the trail area along this abutment would be narrow and composed of loose rock, a constructed barrier would be needed at

the edge of the cliff for safety reasons. Also, drainage water from the south, along the west highway embankment, has cut a deep ditch as it approaches Little Beaver Creek. A 30'-40' bridge to span this ditch is needed to provide safe passage. Plus, the only feasible footing location for a bridge's west end would have the trail crossing into the middle of the adjoining landowner's driveway. In addition, gaining access to cross under the highway bridge would require walking very close to a house just east of the highway.

A third possible option to walk through a large culvert, carrying an unnamed stream, under the highway, about ½ mile to the south, was briefly considered. This third option was quickly deemed to be not feasible and was also dropped from further consideration.

Due to all of these unsurmountable obstacles, Alternative 3 is not favored. Upon further site investigation, it has been determined that it is simply not feasible to pass under the Highway 11 bridge over Little Beaver Creek.

Alternative 4

Since Alternative 4 is identical to Alternative 1, except that the variations described in Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 are both incorporated, refer to their above analysis' for explanation of why Alternative 4 is not preferred.

Alternative 5 - No Action

Under this alternative, no planned trail alignment and corridor of opportunity is adopted by the planning team. Efforts to construct and maintain the trail are not initiated in any organized fashion. Instead, any attempted efforts are sporadic and disjointed. In absence of a plan, governmental agencies are not attracted to committing resources to the trail. County, township, and municipal officials have no basis for determining their support for the trail or for incorporating the trail into other planning. Volunteer organizations working on the trail have no guidance about which landowners to contact for permission to route the trail across their lands. Achieving a continuous, scenic trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties under this alternative is more by accident than through planned actions and takes place only where a prior assessment of potential impacts to sensitive resources is completed. The NPS would take no direct action to establish and administer the trail other than limited technical assistance to volunteers.

VIII. Affected Environment and Impacts

This section generally describes the present conditions of the area and the potential impacts that could occur if the preferred alternative is implemented.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

Under the consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act, the planning team requested the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's opinion regarding the presence of any rare, threatened and

endangered species within the preferred corridor (Attachment 14). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported that the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a Federally listed endangered species, has a range that lies within Columbiana County.

The Indiana bat summer habitat requirements include dead trees and snags along riparian corridors especially those with exfoliating bark that may be used as maternity roost areas, live trees (such as shagbark hickory) that have exfoliating bark or cavities in the trunk or branches; and stream corridors, riparian areas, and nearby woodlots that provide forage sites. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stated, "Providing no live or dead trees with cavities or exfoliating bark will be cut during construction of the trail, building the trail will have no adverse impact on the Indiana bat."

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources provided a list of state endangered, state threatened, and special interest species in the corridor. They include the wavy-rayed lampmussel, winter wren, common barn-owl, Canada warbler, hellbender salamander, American bittern, sora, Virginia rail, spotted turtle, common snipe, cliff swallow, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, southern woodrush, mountain-fringe viny flower, shale barren pussy-toes, leathery grape-fern, reflexed sedge, pepsissewa, oak fern, Bicknell's pani-grass, American chestnut, pinxter-flower, pale straw sedge, necklace sedge, straw sedge, prairie tick-trefoil, simple willow-herb, bog bedstraw, small purple fringed orchid, marsh spear-grass, hoary willow, and water-starwort.

Footpath construction and use have the potential to cause some local disturbance to vegetation and wildlife, but usually this will be slight. In most instances, the trail alignment can be adjusted or relocated within the proposed corridor to reduce impacts, should anything of concern be identified.

Soil and Water Resources

Trail construction, use, and maintenance will normally result in limited soil compaction or movement. Even in steep or unstable soil conditions, careful design and construction techniques, such as those shown in the *National Parks Service's Trail Management Handbook*, the draft *North Country Trail - Design, Construction, and Maintenance Handbook*, or the *AMC Field Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance* by Proudman and Rajala, will minimize erosion problems. Most of the soils along the proposed alignment are well suited for trails. The primary limiting factor is the poorly drained soils in low areas, creating a potential for compaction. However, since these low areas are generally flat, little erosion is expected. Wet areas are primarily an inconvenience for the trail user and will be avoided or crossed using appropriate structures to provide for dry footing.

Minimum impact on water quality is anticipated in construction, use, and maintenance of the proposed route, so long as erosion control practices are applied. Experience has shown that with careful trail design and construction, water quality will not suffer.

Little Beaver Creek Scenic River

Public Law 90-542 establishes the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and contains guidelines for the management of designated rivers. A river can be added to the national system in two ways--by an act of Congress or through authority granted to the Secretary of the Interior in 2(a)(ii) of the Act.

“Upon application by the Governor or Governors of the State or States involved, the Secretary can designate a river as a component of the national system provided that the river has been designated as a wild, scenic, or recreational river by or pursuant to an act of the legislature of the State or States through which it flows to be permanently administered as a wild, scenic, or recreational river by an agency or political subdivision of the State or States concerned.”

On October 23, 1975, in response to an application from the Governor of Ohio, the Secretary of the Interior designated 33 miles of Little Beaver Creek as a State-administered component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. All 33 miles were included under the “scenic” river classification. The Director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources had previously designated Little Beaver Creek, on January 15, 1974, as a State Wild and Scenic River under Ohio’s scenic rivers legislation (Attachment 9). The following segments of Little Beaver Creek were included in the national designation:

Main Stem: The entire Main Stem, from the confluence of the West and Middle Forks to the mouth at the Ohio River. Under the State legislation, the upper portion of the Main Stem, from the confluence of the West and Middle Forks to a point 3/4 mile north of Grimm’s Bridge, is designated as a State “wild river.” From there to the to the Ohio/Pennsylvania State line, the Main Stem is designated as a State “scenic river”.

North Fork: From the confluence of Brush Run to the confluence with the Main Stem at Fredericktown. The State designation includes all of the North Fork, from the Ohio/Pennsylvania State line near Negley downstream to the confluence with the Main Stem, a longer section than the national designation. From the Ohio/Pennsylvania State line downstream to where Jackman Road (Twp. Rd. 952) formerly crossed the river, the State has designated it a “scenic river.” From this point downstream to the confluence with the Main Stem at Fredericktown, the State has designated it a “wild river.”

Middle Fork: From the vicinity of the Elkton Road (Twp. Road 901) bridge crossing to the confluence with the West Fork. This section is designated as a State “scenic river” under State legislation.

West Fork: From the vicinity of the Y-Camp Road (Twp. Road 914) bridge crossing to the confluence with the Middle Fork. This portion has been designated as a “wild river” under the State scenic rivers program. The West Fork is not in the North Country NST corridor.

The total mileage designated under the State scenic rivers program is 36 miles. The distance designated as "scenic river" is 16 miles. The total distance designated as "wild river" is 20 miles.

Section 10(a) of the Act states:

"Each river component will be managed to protect and enhance the values for which the river was designated, while providing for public recreation and resource uses which do not adversely impact or degrade those values."

"Such features as trail bridges, and other minor structures are permitted when compatible with the classification of the river area and provided that the area remains natural in appearance and the practices or structures harmonize with the surrounding environment."

The Act does not prohibit a hiking trail within the river corridor. However, location and construction of the trail do have the potential to be in conflict with the river's management regulations. Since new bridges crossing a designated river are usually not allowed, the trail location is to take advantage of existing bridges. The management regulations also affect other aspects of trail location and construction techniques. Mitigating measures are defined in Section IX--Trail Use, Development, and Management Considerations.

Flood Plains

Executive Order 11988--Floodplain Management-- governs potential impacts of Federal projects on flood plains. NPS regulations for implementing this order provide under Section 5, Scope, Part B Excepted Actions, 2a: ". . . foot trails are excepted from compliance with this order."

Wetlands

There are only a few wetlands along the trail alignment of the preferred alternative. If a wetland is near the trail route, every effort will be made to avoid or skirt it. Any crossing of wetlands will be done using elevated boardwalks placed on piling, floating puncheon, or other approved techniques. Due to the low impact of typical trail construction and use, no adverse impacts are anticipated. If adverse impacts to wetlands are expected, which is highly unlikely, coordination with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to protect the wetlands as state resource waters will remain consistent with provisions in Ohio Water Quality Standards (Chapter 3745-1-05 Ohio Administrative Code, Anti-degradation Policy).

Cultural, Historic, and Archeological Resources

The preferred route is located on the historic Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath, and passes through Fredericktown, Lisbon, and Hanoverton, all towns that contain many historical buildings and sites listed in the Ohio Historic Inventory and the National Register of Historic Places. Since

the majority of the trail route passing through the towns is on sidewalks and/or paved surfaces, trail establishment will have no adverse impact on these towns. Instead, the historic sites and associated interpretation will provide local cultural experiences for the trail user.

According to the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (OHPO), the portions of the trail located on the Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath could lead to an increased use of the trail and have impacts on important historic properties. The OHPO letter (Attachment 13) states: "A check of our records shows that there are currently several known historic properties which could be impacted by the project. The Sandy and Beaver Canal is considered potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. However, in many places the canal is in poor condition. It is likely that any impacts to the canal can be minimized by careful planning. There are many known archeological sites listed in the Ohio archeological inventory located along the corridor. These sites span more than 10,000 years of prehistory and history." While the OHPO feels that the trail could have tremendous beneficial effects for historic preservation concerns, they also recognize that the trail is likely to cause direct impacts to important historic properties, both from actual work on the trail and from the associated developments such as trailhead parking lots. Further discussion on archeologic protection can be found in Section IX--Trail Use, Development, and Management Considerations.

Socio-economic Impacts

Construction and use of a new trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties may produce both positive benefits and negative consequences. Negative impacts on the human environment are generally limited to a perceived, slight increase in nuisance type activities. Adjoining landowners typically have fears about loss of privacy, vandalism, and littering when a new trail is being planned.

Past experience and formal studies have shown these fears to be groundless as the perceived impacts do not develop after the trail is constructed. In 1992, an extensive study, *The Impact of Rails Trails*, was conducted by the National Park Service in cooperation with Pennsylvania State University. This study showed that problems had not developed as feared and that the vast majority of landowners were more satisfied with the trail after it was in place than they were before it was in place. Additionally, adjoining landowners found that they personally made use of the trail.

Trail users and landowners alike normally find recreation and health and fitness opportunities to be the most important benefits of a trail. However, other benefits normally include aesthetic beauty, open space, and in some instances higher property values. Local communities enjoy bolstered economies and increased local pride among other benefits.

Many of the issues raised by adjoining landowners are legitimate concerns, and they are addressed through trail design solutions. These design solutions are spelled out in Section IX--Trail Use, Development, and Management Considerations.

Prime Agricultural Lands

Prime farmland as defined by the Soil Conservation Service is "farmland which meets a set of technical criteria based upon soil water capacity or availability of irrigation, temperature regime, pH, depth of water table, conductivity, exchange sodium, flood potential, erosion potential, permeability and percentage of fragment rocks." Wherever the corridor passes through soil types classified as prime farmland soils it avoids open fields and follows wooded areas, fringes of wetlands, and wooded fencerows--areas that the landowners have not developed for agriculture. Since the trail alignment purposely seeks to avoid crossing fields, there should be little impact on prime agricultural lands.

Developed Areas and Communities

The preferred corridor links the communities of Negley, Anchor, Fredericktown, Elkton, Jordanville, Lisbon, Hanoverton, Kensington, and Minerva. These linkages provide increased opportunities for local recreationists. Additionally, studies have shown that recreation trails often bring increased economic activities to a community. Trail side businesses experience increased sales of food, drink, refreshments, lodging, and other goods and services.

Quality of Trail User Experience

One of the reasons for the selection of the preferred alternative was because it provides the highest quality user experiences. It is located in the most scenic areas of the two counties and is steeped with local historical significance.

IX. Trail Use, Development, and Management Considerations

Type of Use

The National Trails System Act specifies that National Scenic Trails are not open to motorized use by the general public. The 1982 comprehensive plan for the North Country NST explains that the trail is primarily intended to be a foot trail--meaning that traveling on foot is the one use that must be provided for on all segments of the trail. Other non-motorized uses such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding may be permitted on a given segment according to the desires and policies of the managing authority responsible for the segment -- only if the trail segment has been developed to safely accommodate the additional activity, the activity will not cause significant deterioration of the trail, and the activity will not conflict with the principal user (the hiker).

Because of the many private holdings that the trail must cross in Columbiana and Carroll Counties, the planning team is recommending the lowest impact trail possible--a foot travel only trail. A foot travel trail can be accommodated with very little impact on the land or the surroundings. The many fences can be easily crossed or gone through using stiles. To provide

for other uses requires the trail, associated bridges, and fence crossings to be constructed to higher standards. Also, other uses on the trail may lead to erosion problems, muddy conditions, widening of the trail, greater maintenance, and even relocation. These unacceptable resource impacts eventually result in the degradation of the hiker experience. The one area where bicycle or horse use is acceptable is the short stretch of the Leetonia-Lisbon Greenway if it is developed.

The current National Park Service position regarding bicycling and horses, based on the policies in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982*, is:

Bicycling is best accommodated as a use on the North Country NST on rail-trail segments and on other short sections of hardened surface (1) specifically designed for wheeled vehicles, where the bikes would not damage natural or trail resources, (2) that are parts of previously established multiple use trails that become part of the North Country Trail route, (3) where bicycles could be physically restricted to the designated section, and (4) where bicycle use would not adversely affect the recreational experience of hikers. These conditions generally are not found on the typical, single-track, forested and rural segments of the North Country Trail and the trail in these areas should not be developed to the necessary higher standards solely to accommodate bicycles.

We believe that horse use is best accommodated on the North Country NST on those segments of trail which have been specifically designed and hardened to withstand such use. These conditions generally are not found on the typical, single-track, forested and rural segments of the North Country Trail. Additionally, horse use is perhaps an acceptable use on most trail segments within the prairies and grasslands of North Dakota and western Minnesota, where the character of the North Country NST changes from primarily a wooded experience to primarily a prairie (big sky) experience, passing through many miles of farms, ranches, and grasslands. Here, the flavor of the trails is more "western" than "eastern" and the dryer soils are more forgiving of horse traffic than in wetter, forested areas. In these areas, there may also be opportunities to establish parallel hiking and horse trails, such as along the McCluskey and New Rockford Canals--horses on the old access road and hikers on a foot trail within the boundary of the canal right-of-way.

Trail Design and Maintenance

In Columbiana and Carroll Counties, the trail will be created by clearing a path through brush and woods. When on private property, it will usually be located along the back sides of the property. Vegetation will be trimmed to keep it from touching hikers or their backpacks with extra allowance for seasonal growth. The typical clearing window is four feet wide and eight feet high. Only brush and very small trees will be cut. Larger trees will be left in place and the trail will wind between them. On flat ground, the path remains natural and ungraded. When the trail traverses sidehill, "benching" will normally be done in order to provide a flat walking surface.

Simple, native material erosion control devices will be used for erosion control.

The trail will be cleared and erosion control devices will be maintained two to three times per year using hand tools such as weed whips, lopping shears, pruning saws, shovels, and appropriate power tools such as weed trimmers, and mowers. Chain saws may also be used for the removal of large fallen trees and limbs.

During the construction of the trail a minute amount of noise and air pollution can be expected due to equipment operation and disruption of surface conditions. Trail plans will be designed to minimize any soil erosion. Maintenance of the trail will also result in some very limited noise and air pollution due to equipment operation such as mowers and brush cutters.

Impacts to soil and water have been discussed in Section VIII-B. Careful design and construction techniques, such as those shown in the NPS's *Trail Management Handbook*, the draft *North Country Trail - Design, Construction, and Maintenance Handbook*, or the *AMC Field Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance* by Proudman and Rajala will be used.

Scenic River Designation

The preferred trail alignment is frequently within the corridor of State and/or Nationally designated segments of the North Fork, the Middle Fork, and the Main Stem of Little Beaver Creek Wild and Scenic River (Attachment 9). Special precautions need to be taken when locating and constructing the trail or trail structures on these segments. The wild and scenic river corridor normally extends 1,000 feet from the stream. Whenever the trail alignment is within this corridor, coordination with the ODNR (Steve Roloson, 11027 Hopkins Road, Garrettsville, OH 42231, 216-527-4184) should be done prior to construction.

A National Scenic Trail is compatible with a National or State Scenic River, if it is properly located, designed, installed, and maintained. Nothing is to be done that dramatically changes the character of the river. Medium and large size trees are not to be cut; bridges across side drainages are to be rustic and not in view from the creek; and sidehill trail construction is to be out of sight and well designed to prevent erosion. Where topography permits, trails are to be set back a minimum of 120' from the river except for when the trail follows the towpath. This 120' set back is to be maintained as a riparian forest buffer to provide protection for the river's water quality and aquatic life. In other words, trail activities are to be unobtrusive so that they are generally unnoticed by the recreationist on the river, and have the least amount of environmental disturbance.

Natural Areas and Preserves

The Ohio Division of Natural Areas and Preserves (DNAP) has designated certain areas, primarily along the North Fork, as conservation easements and nature preserves. In one case, the preferred trail alignment passes through or nearby the Little Beaver Creek State Nature Preserve (Attachment 10). While walking on the designated trail is a permitted activity, an access permit

must be obtained from the DNAP when leaving the designated trail to enter the preserve. Appropriate measures to inform hikers of the locations of these preserves and the regulations pertaining to them will be specified by ODNR and incorporated into the final trail plan which will be published after the Final Decision Notice is announced.

Wetland Crossings

Crossing broad expanses of wetland will be avoided by careful trail planning. Where it is necessary to cross creeks, runs, wetlands, and other seasonally wet areas, puncheon, boardwalks or simple bridges will be used. Many proven designs using native or treated materials are available. Several designs are shown in the NPS's *Trail Management Handbook* and the *AMC Field Guide to Trail Building and Maintenance* by Proudman and Rajala. The objective is to insure minimum impact to wetlands and other bodies of water while providing dry, safe passage for hikers.

In all instances, wetlands will be treated in accordance with NPS standards and guidelines, and Ohio Water Quality Standards (Chapter 3745-1-05 Ohio Administrative Code, Anti-degradation Policy).

Signing

The trail will be marked with 2 X 6-inch vertical blazes. Blazes can be painted directly on trees, or nail-on plastic or aluminum ones can be used. They will face the hiker coming from either direction. Small 3-1/2-inch blue and gold North Country Trail emblems will be placed where the trail crosses minor roads and at about 1/2 mile intervals along the trail. Large, 9-inch North Country Trail emblems will be placed at major trailheads and major road crossings.

A complete signing system has been developed for the trail and is shown in the soon-to-be-completed *North Country Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance Handbook*. This handbook is meant to guide managing authorities by defining workable trail standards including signing. The ultimate objective is to achieve signing consistency and clarity on a trailwide basis. Signing throughout the counties will be standardized. The sign system includes signs informing the public about what types of uses are appropriate (i.e. foot travel only); reminders to the hiker to observe good manners and protect private property (i.e. entering private property, leave no rubbish, start no fires, stay on the trail, and camping status); destination signs at roads and trailheads informing the hiker how far something is down the trail; and interpretive signs where key features are located. Various types of signs will be posted periodically as needed. Maintenance of signs will be performed two to three times per year as part of routine maintenance.

Stiles

Where necessary, structures called stiles for crossing fences will be installed to avoid hikers damaging the fence or livestock possibly escaping through a gate that was inadvertently left open.

There are a number of "through-the-fence" and "over-the-fence" type stiles that effectively prevent passage by livestock and unauthorized users, such as ATVs and horses, while providing passage for the foot traveler. The National Park Service can provide local trail builders with plans for various stile designs and the final one can be selected or modified in consultation with the landowner.

Litter

Prevention and education will be accomplished through signing, brochures, other literature, and talks. If littering does occur, it will be cleaned up every time the trail is maintained. Experience has shown that hikers leave very little litter because they usually carry out what they carry in. Any litter that does occur is normally near roads and other access points, and is easier to monitor and clean up.

Hunting

Granting permission for trail passage does not convey any hunting access or privileges. Land that is posted "closed" to hunting or fishing remains closed. This will be emphasized in signing and in literature.

Hunters and hikers will be educated by members of the North Country Trail Association and the National Park Service regarding potential conflicts and dangers during hunting season through a variety of informational techniques. Hikers will be asked to avoid the trail during the time of heaviest hunting and to wear bright colors in the fall. Hunters will be reminded of standard firearm safety practices such as not shooting at a sound and not shooting toward or down a known travelway.

While fall is the season for hunting, it is also considered by many hikers as the best season for their activity. Although closing a section of the trail at this time is not desirable, some landowner agreements may include hiker restrictions for short periods during hunting season--particularly the firearms deer season.

Archeologic Protection

Since the proposed corridor located on the Sandy and Beaver Canal towpath could have impacts on important historic properties, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office has suggested careful planning to avoid or minimize impacts (Attachment 13). In some cases, OHPO suggests that intensive survey efforts may be needed to identify these properties. They also request detailed mapping and descriptions of the project so they can assist in determining the impact area and the known cultural resources.

Based on prior experience, the National Park Service Midwest Archeological Center believes that an archeologic survey prior to trail construction is of little value. Trail location and construction impacts a very narrow area about 18-48 inches in width. During construction, a carefully flagged

