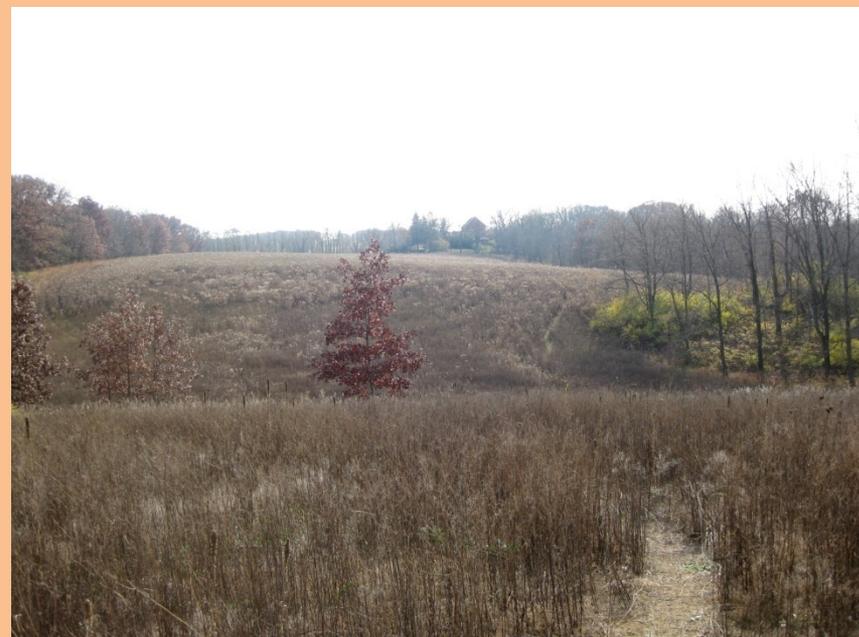




# GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN and ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

## Draft Alternatives

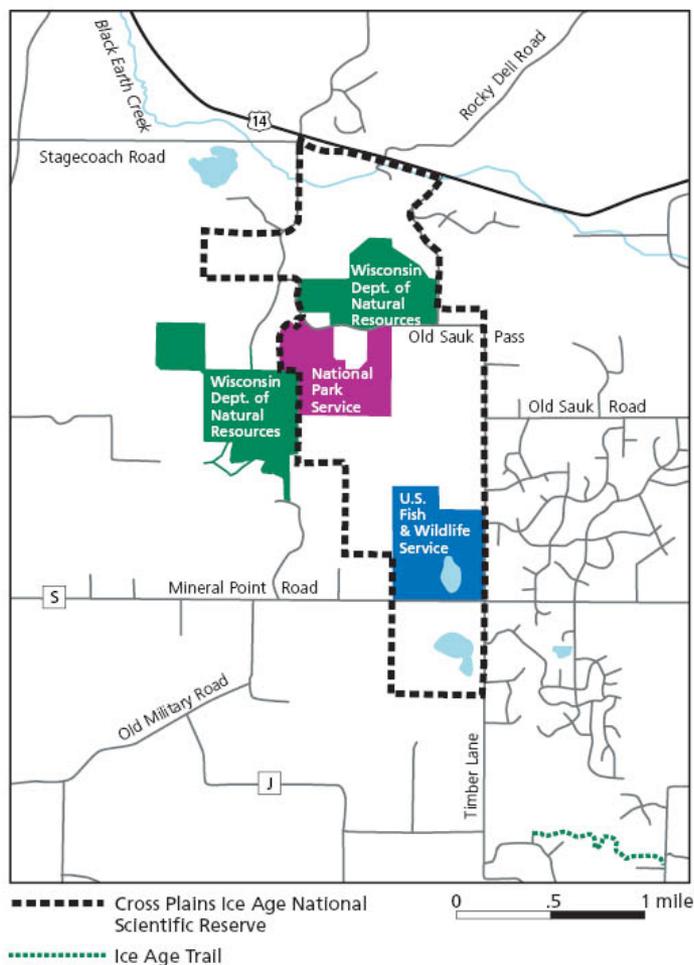


Wisconsin DNR property (foreground),  
and the NPS interpretive site (background).



## Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains – Draft Alternatives

Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains



# The Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains

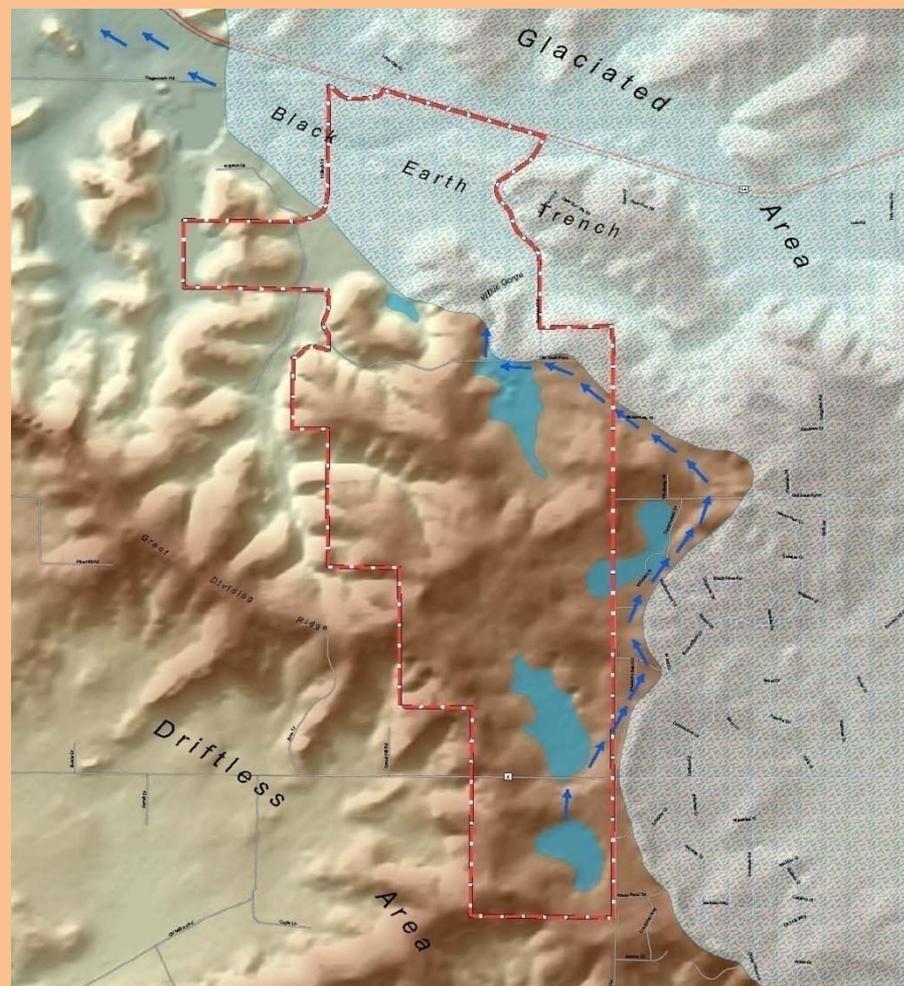
- ~1,600 acres within the project boundary
- NPS land – 156 acres
- FWS land – 174 acres
- DNR land – 151 acres

## Natural Resource Features

### **Terminal Moraines –**

This is where the glacier stopped; they are more distinct east of Timber Lane and south of Old Sauk Road.

**Driftless Area –** The area west of the Terminal Moraine and ponds/basins that was not glaciated. Marked by deep ravines and valleys.



## Natural Resource Features



**Meltwater ponds** formed in basins in front of the glacier

The water in these ponds eventually found a place to flow underneath the glacier, cutting a **gorge** that today cuts across Old Sauk Pass a short distance west of Cleveland Road



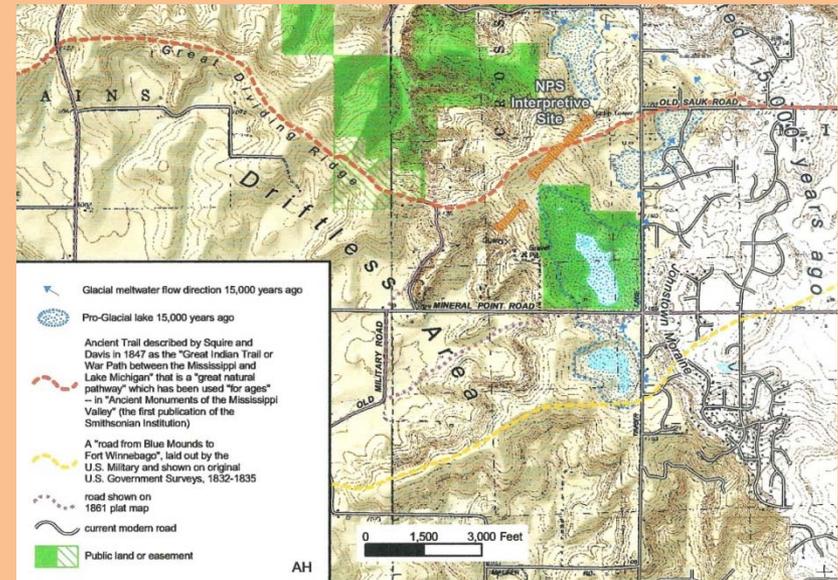
## National Significance

The Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains is a combination of two related national designations:

- **Ice Age National Scientific Reserve**, authorized by Congress in 1964 as a cooperative project between Secretary of the Interior and the Wisconsin DNR. The Cross Plains site is one of nine units that make up the Reserve.
- The Cross Plains unit of the Reserve is an “Affiliated Area” of the National Park System and a Wisconsin State Park (Cross Plains State Park).
- **Ice Age National Scenic Trail**, authorized by Congress in 1980 as a component of the National Trails System. The Trail is a partnership between the NPS, Wisconsin DNR, and the nonprofit Ice Age Trail Alliance.
- In FY 2001, Congress appropriated funds to the NPS to purchase lands for an “interpretive site” for the Trail within the Cross Plains Reserve boundary.

# Cultural Resource Features

- The Wilkie farmstead, dating from the 1850s, and the farming community that developed in this area.
- The Great Indian Trail, an ancient pathway between the Mississippi River and Lake Michigan.
- The Military Road, from Blue Mounds to Fort Winnebago.





# Partners in Planning and Managing Lands





## Planning – The Reasons

- The DNR has owned land for the Reserve since 1975. The NPS and DNR have acquired several additional parcels since 2002. **We need to decide what we will do with our lands**, i.e. how they will serve the purposes for which they were acquired.
- **We need to respond to public interest in transforming these lands into recreational and educational assets for the surrounding communities.** Our plan will enable public officials and citizens to make appropriate decisions about land uses, services, etc. in relation to these lands, and adjacent lands that may be affected.



## What Do General Management Plans Do?

- Define desired conditions for resources and visitor experiences in different areas of the park for the long term (15-20 years).
- Define what facilities (trails, parking lots, interpretive signs, visitor center, etc.) are appropriate in these different areas to provide these desired conditions.
- GMPs are **not** site development plans.
- GMPs do **not** guarantee funding.



## The Planning Process

Summer 2008 - Initiate the planning process. Brief public officials and hold public open house meetings on August 27 & 28.

Fall 2008 to Summer 2009 - Develop a range of reasonable alternatives for the park's future. Seek concurrence from NPS and DNR managers. Hold public meetings on September 9 & 10.

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Fall and Winter 2010/2011 - Revise and publish the Final GMP/EIS

Winter 2011 and Beyond - Issue a Record of Decision (federal) and obtain Natural Resources Board approval (state). Implement the plan as available funding allows.



## Public Scoping Summary

August 2008 Public Open House Meetings—200 attendees; 37 written comments via website and mail

### Identified Values:

- The **natural resources or setting** (i.e., the **flora, wildlife, views, natural quiet and undeveloped areas**).
- The **scenic resources and natural landscape** that can be preserved.
- The **visitor and recreation opportunities** available in the Complex.
- **The Ice Age Trail**, for which there were many expressions of **great pride**.

### Identified Concerns:

- **Need more land acquisition and planning** for a continuous pathway and resource preservation.
- Presence of **invasive species**.
- Need to **garner support from local governments**, and **engage local residents/instill a sense of ownership**.
- Need to create a **buffer from development**, and **protect the views** from urban intrusions.
- Primary threats were identified as **unlimited development, urban sprawl, encroachment, and overuse**.

### Identified Opportunities:

- Provide **more educational and interpretive opportunities**.
- **Continued restoration and preservation**.
- **Accommodate different user groups and recreational uses**.
- Provide **greater public access**.
- Keep the Complex **as wild and natural as possible**.



## Four Preliminary Alternatives

No Action (Baseline for Comparison)

Alternative 1 – Ecological Restoration Emphasis

Alternative 2 – Interpretation and Education Emphasis

Alternative 3 – Outdoor Recreation Emphasis



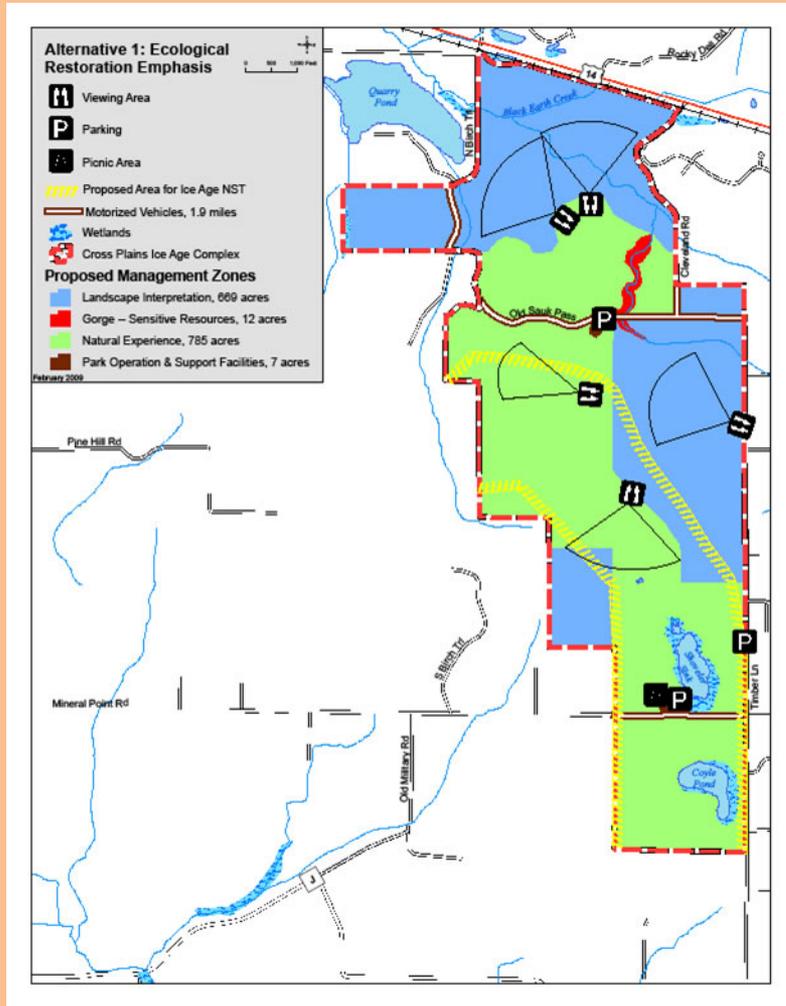
## No Action Alternative (Baseline for Comparison)



- On DNR- or NPS-owned land – The Ice Age Trail would be established, but it would be the only recreational facility provided on the properties.
- FWS land would continue to be open for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-dependent activities; no visitor facilities other than two existing small, non-surfaced parking lots.
- Resource management would be minimal. DNR and FWS manage vegetation on land they own. NPS has stabilized facilities to prevent deterioration.
- Privately-owned lands within the Complex consist mostly of agricultural fields with scattered houses and outbuildings.

## Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains – Draft Alternatives

### Alternative 1 – Ecological Restoration Emphasis



- Ecosystem restoration to a period before **European settlement**; interpretation focused on the **Complex's evolution since the glacial period under minimal human influence**
- **Glacial landscapes revealed and interpreted** at key points; however, across most of the site, the primary purpose would be **ecosystem preservation and management**.
- **Natural ecosystems are restored/recreated and interpreted** with signs and exhibits along trails.
- Visitor opportunities to enjoy a **sense of perceived remoteness and quiet** primarily by hiking.



## Alternative 1 - Key Elements

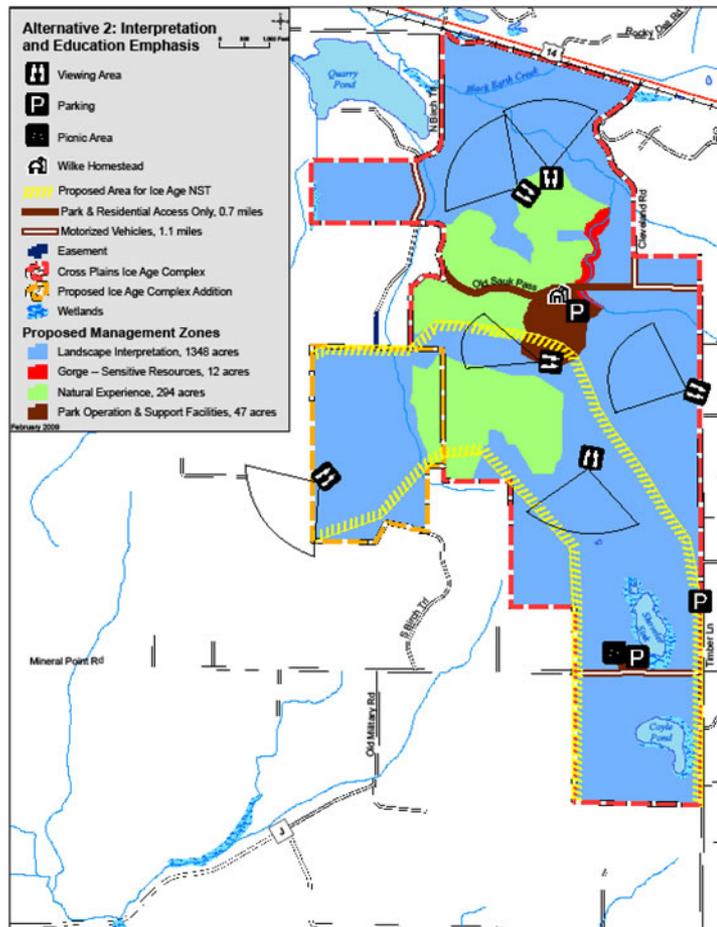
1. **Vegetative Management**: Pre-settlement vegetation would be restored through active management across most of the site, applying natural processes whenever possible
2. **Former Wilkie Farmstead**: Buildings would be removed, and a parking area would be established here.
3. **Old Sauk Pass**: No change, it would remain open.
4. **Visitor Access**: Site could be accessed at three points: Mineral Point Road, Timber Lane, and Old Sauk Pass.
5. **Gorge**: A minimally developed trail to the Gorge with overlooks would be provided. The trail would wind along the upper rim of the Gorge.
6. **Trails**: Beyond the Ice Age NST, relatively few trails would be established (fewest of all the alternatives).





## Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains – Draft Alternatives

## Alternative 2 – Interpretation and Education Emphasis



- The glacial landscape would be interpreted with a **focus on evolution of the Complex from the retreat of the last glacier.**
- Vegetation is managed to **reveal the glacial landscape.**
- Visitor opportunities to **experience a wide variety of resources** – ecological, geological, and cultural – in sheltered and indoor settings at core of the property (former Wilkie farmstead), and hiking throughout the site.
- Interpretive trails** would be placed to **tell stories of the formation of the glacial landscape** and, to a lesser extent, about the ecological resources (such as the oak savanna).



## Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains – Draft Alternatives

1. **Former Wilkie Farmstead:** House and barn, and potentially outbuildings, would remain and be interpreted (in part) for visitors. New facilities for only site maintenance. Visitor contact space and staff offices accommodated within existing buildings.
2. **Old Sauk Pass:** Would be the primary access to the Complex and closed to through traffic. This would allow safe passage for visitors to geologic features. A request would be made to the township to abandon portions of the road for park purposes, bicycles, pedestrians, and to allow access for private landowners.
3. **Visitor Access:** Primary access would be via Old Sauk Pass. Secondary access off of Mineral Point Road and Timber Lane.
4. **Gorge:** A trail with overlooks would be provided, surfaced to accommodate people with disabilities and large numbers of visitors. Controlled partial access may be provided along the floor of the Gorge.
5. **Trails:** Beyond the Ice Age NST, a moderate number of other interpretive trails would be established. Existing horse and snowmobile trails would remain (no expansion).

## Alternative 2 – Key Elements



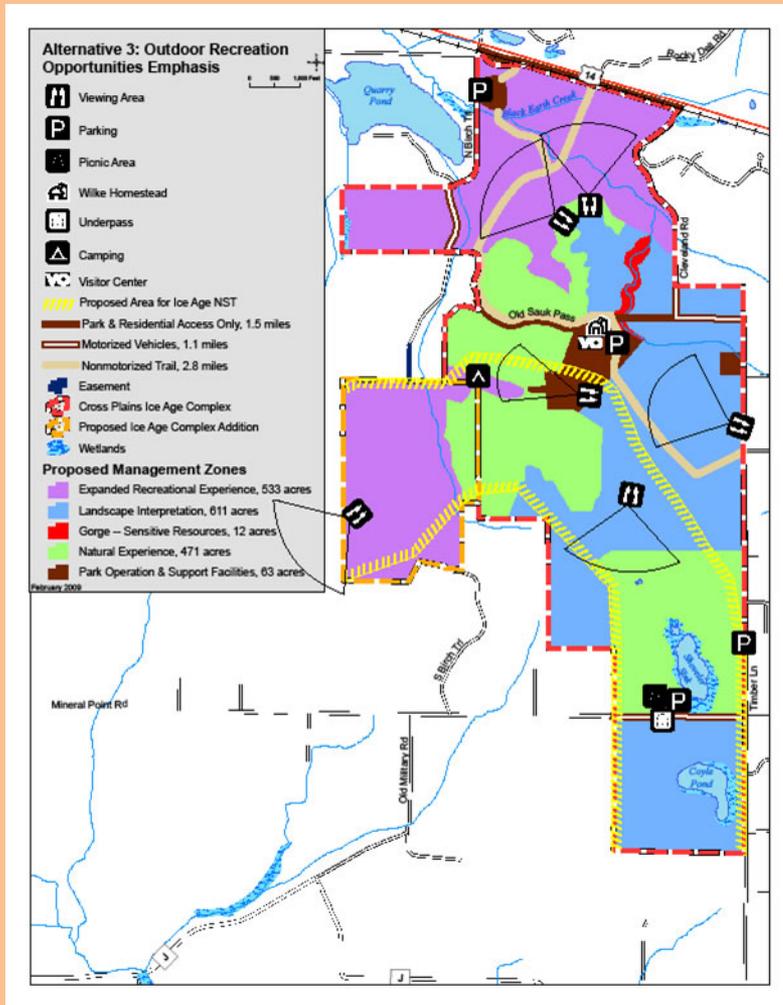
## Alternative 2 - Key Elements (Continued)



6. **Vegetative Management**: Most (75%) of the site would be managed to reveal the glacial landscape. Options might include planting native short grass prairie or agricultural crops. Ecological systems that existed prior to European settlement would be restored on 25% of the site.
7. **Vistas**: Key vistas preserved, enhanced, and possibly created by selective cutting.
8. **Boundary**: The Complex's boundary expanded to the west to include additional DNR-owned land . This land contains excellent examples of Driftless Area terrain. Adding it to the boundary would present expanded opportunities for preservation and interpretation consistent with the overall plan for the Complex.

## Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains – Draft Alternatives

### Alternative 3 – Outdoor Recreation Emphasis



- Visitors would be offered a variety of **low-impact outdoor recreational experiences**.
- Natural and cultural resources would be interpreted through indoor and outdoor facilities** (visitor center, wayside exhibits along trails, etc.).
- Hiking would be featured** through more trails and stopping points to serve different interests.
- A **surfaced bicycle path** would facilitate access and offer a different way to experience resources.
- Primitive camping** allowed in a designated area for Ice Age Trail users.

## Alternative 3 – Key Elements



1. **Former Wilkie Farmstead**: House and barn, and perhaps outbuildings, would remain, and may or may not be open to visitors. A visitor center would be developed to provide space for interpretive and educational facilities for visitors. Staff offices would also be included. Outdoor gathering spaces (shelters, amphitheater, etc.) would be located here. Maintenance functions would be provided here (unless future acquisitions allow development away from the visitor core).
2. **Old Sauk Pass**: Would be the primary access to the Complex and closed to through traffic. This would allow safe passage for visitors to geologic features. A request would be made to the township to abandon portions of the road for park purposes, bicycles, pedestrians, and to allow access for private landowners.
3. **Visitor Access**: At four points: Mineral Point Road, Timber Lane, Old Sauk Pass, and North Birch Trail.
4. **Gorge**: A trail with overlooks provided. If feasible in terms of cost, and environmental impacts, a pedestrian bridge spanning the Gorge could be built to provide visitors a unique perspective on its formation.



## Alternative 3 - Key Elements (Continued)

### 5. Trails:

- Trail network with half-day hiking experiences.
- Accessible, surfaced trails from VC to both the Gorge and the high point on the NPS interpretive site.
- Surfaced bike/pedestrian trail (built by NPS and/or DNR) would traverse the property.
- A request to build a bike trail on Complex's northern boundary, along the railroad, would be considered.
- Existing horse and snowmobile trails would remain (no expansion).

6. Vegetative Management: Ecological systems that existed prior to European settlement restored on part of the site. Other areas managed to reveal glacial landscape.

7. Vista Points: Vista Points northwest of the Gorge would have bench areas for resting and enjoying the view.

8. Boundary: The Complex's boundary expanded to the west to include additional DNR-owned land. Adding this land would provide more opportunity for recreation, especially for a primitive camping experience near the Ice Age NST.

9. Primitive Camping: Limited primitive camping possibilities in the west and north.

10. The Ice Age National Scenic Trail: The Ice Age NST would cross the highest point in the Complex to provide views of the surrounding landscape and access to visitor facilities on the NPS land.



## The Planning Schedule

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## Conclusion

- We will try to answer any questions you may have.
- Please be sure to give us your comments on which features of the various alternatives you like and why.
  - Written—comment sheet, letter, email message
  - Oral—here today or phone call to the NPS or DNR
  - NPS Park Planning website

*<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>*

- Public input received by October 16 would be most helpful.
- Planning Team members would be glad to meet with governmental bodies, organizations, or anyone desiring more information.
- Thank you for coming!