

## Interpretive Partners

Partners in interpretation include the Ice Age Trail Alliance, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Aldo Leopold Foundation.

***Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA).*** The Ice Age Trail Alliance is a 401(c)3 non-profit grassroots volunteer- and member-based organization that works with NPS and DNR to support and protect the trail. The professional staff of seven plus fifteen board members addresses everything from trail layout and construction methods to land stewardship, trail maintenance, volunteer organization and support, and land acquisition.

The IATA got its start in 1958 as the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation. In the early 1970s, the Ice Age Trail Council was formed to carry out the vision for the trail. The two organizations merged in 1990. In 2009, the name was changed to the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Seven different informal offices along the trail were consolidated into one in 2008 with the construction of the beautiful building that now serves as headquarters, which was made possible through the generosity of the Congressman Henry S. Reuss family. (Congressman Reuss was the first to publish a professional book about the trail, *On the Trail of the Ice Age*, in 1976.) The headquarters location in the village of Cross Plains is ideal: it is right on the trail, close to Madison's population center, close to partner organizations, and close to

the Ice Age Complex at Cross Plains. About 20,000 cars pass the headquarters on Main Street each day. The Alliance is funded by multiple public and private sources, including the NPS and WDNR. There are 21 different trail chapters, covering 30 counties. Chapter volunteers work on trail building and maintenance, as well as providing support in the form of meals and refreshments for the workers.

The Mobile Skills Crew (MSC), one of the IATA's signature programs, is celebrating its tenth year of operation. The MSC is a statewide group of volunteers, trained in advanced crew leadership and trail construction techniques, who bring their knowledge and expertise to coordinate, manage, and train volunteers for local trail-building



projects. The program brings professional quality management and sustainable trail standards to the trail development system. Depending on the project, the Mobile Skills Crews can number from 30 people to more than 300, and have completed over 70 Ice Age Trail projects to date. Many participants have gone on to join the IATA staff or board leadership.

**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.** The DNR manages the wide range of conservation and recreation functions that would be expected of such an agency. It oversees forest management, environmental protection, water resources, and outdoor recreational activities. It manages licensing and regulation; provides for statewide recreational opportunities from ATV riding to wildlife viewing; and educates the public about recreational safety, outdoor skills, tracking, trapping, angling, and invasive species. It provides a number of educational services including access to a web-based program on sustainability called Green & Healthy Schools; an ecology unit called Project Learning Tree; water education for teachers (WET); Project WILD, an educational program about wildlife and responsible human actions; and Get Outdoors, which are scheduled activities to encourage kids and adults to enjoy nature. The NPS and DNR have a close, cooperative relationship regarding the Ice Age NST and Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. The

WDNR has a number of staff, including interpreters at Devil's Lake State Park (a Reserve Unit), that provide a variety of educational programs on the significant geologic, biologic, and cultural resources found within the AGO project area. The interpretive resources that DNR brings to the Ice Age NST AGO project are truly exceptional.

**ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION.**

The Aldo Leopold Foundation is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, donor-supported organization based at the Aldo Leopold Legacy Center in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The foundation's mission is to inspire an ethical relationship between people and land through the legacy of Aldo Leopold. Leopold regarded a land ethic as a product of social evolution. "Nothing so important as an ethic is ever 'written,'" he explained. "It evolves in the minds of a thinking community." The foundation's membership forms a modern day "thinking community," and the foundation's programs create opportunities for rich, diverse, and productive dialogue with members and others about humanity's relationships to land, allowing the idea of a land ethic to unfold in a myriad of ways. The foundation has eleven professional staff whose expertise consists of education and land management specialists, ecologists, biologists, and administrative staff.

The Aldo Leopold Foundation owns and manages the original Aldo Leopold Shack and 300 surrounding acres, in addition to several other

parcels, and also manages much of the remainder of the 1,800-acre Leopold Memorial Reserve. The foundation is committed to the ongoing restoration of the Leopold Shack and Farm, where, in 1935, Aldo Leopold and his family undertook a revolutionary experiment in returning health to a worn out farm. Celebrated in Leopold's classic—*A Sand County Almanac*—the transformed land now supports vibrant forests, wetlands, and prairie and draws visitors from around the world.

## Personnel

It would be virtually impossible to list all the individuals who have supported, sustained, and maintained the Ice Age NST throughout the years of its existence. National Park Service personnel assigned specifically to the project include a Superintendent, Trail Manager, two outdoor recreation planners, a part time GIS specialist, and administrative staff. The staff does not include any interpreters. The Department of Natural Resources brings a wide range of expertise to the trail in all fields, from recreation planning to wildlife management, including interpretation and education programs. The Ice Age Trail Alliance staff includes an executive director, manager of field operations, director of land conservation, information systems coordinator, publications coordinator, eastern field representative, GIS specialist,



administrative and executive assistants, and a coordinator for the Saunters program. Most important are the many volunteers in 21 county chapters located along the Ice Age Trail that have made possible the creation and maintenance of the trail. In 2012, volunteers contributed over 69,000 hours.

**Volunteers building the Cross Plains Segment of the Ice Age Trail, Dane County**  
*Photo courtesy Ice Age Trail Alliance*



Tent camping on Wood Lake Segment, Taylor County  
*Photo courtesy Ice Age Trail Alliance*