



### Introduction

Recommendations for interpreting the AGO segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail were created along two tracks: a track that focuses specifically on the goals of the America's Great Outdoors initiative, and a second track that recommends programs, services, and media in general. In addition, three matrices were created (see Background Material) that provide an inventory of tangible geological, biological, and cultural/historical assets and the rough locations of each along the trail. As planning continues, the topics listed under each interpretive theme will be fleshed out to identify the primary messages for each as they are developed into subtheme statements. Each topic will then be aligned with the appropriate interpretive assets listed in the relevant matrix, creating a theme map of the trail segment's essential stories. Preliminary theme maps (see Background Material) have been developed, and are presented along with images of important AGO sites. As planning continues, locations for interpretive media, whether wayside exhibits, handheld digital devices, or any other method, can be identified in detail through the use of the theme maps and matrices.

The recommendations also address the need to develop interpretive infrastructure to support programming and services. A summary of evaluative methodologies completes the recommendations section.

## Next Steps for the Long-Range Interpretive Plan

Within a year of the completion of this document, the NPS Ice Age NST staff will convene a meeting of a group of stakeholders who will work together to create interpretive messages centered on the topics. These messages will link the themes and subthemes to the information provided in the matrices. Stakeholders will be identified according to their particular area of expertise, and teams of subject matter experts will be formed to address the topics listed under each primary interpretive theme. In reviewing the primary theme statements, the subject matter experts may identify additional topics that they feel should be addressed as part of the overall primary theme.

All the teams will meet together for a briefing on the project and to receive their assigned topics. Each team will meet separately to develop subtheme statements for their topics and, using the matrices, to determine the best locations for their presentation. The end result will be a map of the trail segment that identifies the best place to interpret each of the subthemes. With assignments complete, the teams will again meet together to share ideas and review each other's findings. After revision of the draft theme maps, the park will create an overview map that places each subtheme in context. The park will use this information in the future to develop, prioritize, and strategize regarding the LRIP's recommendations.

This approach provides a model for interpretation of other trail segments in the future, with localized themes and subthemes identified within each segment, but within the context of the larger primary interpretive themes.

## The America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Project

President Barack Obama began the America's Great Outdoors Initiative in April 2010 by directing the Department of the Interior to launch a nationwide listening tour to learn from local communities about innovative and successful conservation initiatives taking place in every state of the union. The program is intended to foster a 21st-century, partner-driven approach to conservation of the natural environment. Goals for the project include engaging youth and urban audiences in outdoor recreation, increasing public awareness about conservation, identifying better management strategies for public lands (especially through creative partnering strategies), and conserving large rural landscapes. Two AGO projects were designated for each state: Wisconsin's designations include the Lake Michigan Water Trail, and a segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The latter was chosen in part because of its location within a two-hour drive of a population of over 11 million people, including two major cities, Milwaukee and Chicago. The following recommendations have been specifically developed to support and sustain the AGO programs goals.

- **OUTREACH TO NEW AUDIENCES.**

Interpretation of the AGO trail segment includes a strong focus on youth and urban audiences, both of which present marketing challenges. The country's youth are increasingly turning to electronic media for their primary experience of their world, and in addition, they often are involved in a wide array of school-related and extracurricular activities that take up much of what otherwise would be free time available to spend outdoors. In addition, many urban audiences are simply unfamiliar with natural and rural environments, tend to have fewer traditions that involve outdoor activities, and in some cases may even harbor fears about the dangers of the natural world. The following recommendations address potential strategies to strengthen outreach to these special audiences.

- **RESEARCH.** Ninety-nine other AGO units in the U.S. are facing the same challenges of recruiting new youth and urban audiences. An audit of the approach of others could yield worthwhile strategies, many of which are described in the Department of Interior's AGO Fifty-state Report (<http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/documents/upload/AGO-50-State-Report.pdf>). For example:

- o At Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, special education and youth programs get underserved audiences out onto Lake Michigan in kayaks and canoes.

- o Public agencies in Hartford, Connecticut, have created a highly successful urban youth rowing program.
- o The City of Detroit has plans to engage youth, particularly in underserved minority communities, to help with waterfront and river restoration work.
- o The River Pathways Program in Phoenix, Arizona, will educate 25,000 inner city youth (94% minority) in basic environmental literacy by 2015. Youth will help build regional trails, monitor fragile riparian resources in the Agua Fria National Monument, and help restore avian and aquatic habitat. The project will also expand urban opportunities for fishing.
- o The state of Alabama is exploring opportunities for expanding outdoor education as part of its public school curricula, including hunter and angler education.
- o The state of Georgia created "Get Outdoors Georgia," a program focusing on both youth and adult populations in urban and rural areas with the goal of achieving a healthier population through outdoor activities.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS.** The following recommendations address urban and youthful audiences.



**Youth building the Ice Age Trail at Straight Lake State Park, Polk County**  
*Photo courtesy Ice Age Trail Alliance*

- o Provide specialized sensitivity training to staff to ensure these audiences receive a warm welcome; attempt to hire more minority park rangers.
- o Create a section of the website that provides advice for uninitiated families regarding clothing, food, water, trail safety, amenities, and where to find additional information.
- o Reach the family- and community-oriented African-American and Hmong audiences by working through community groups and churches, especially those with youth groups.
- o Partner with tribes represented in the state of Wisconsin to engage their youth.
- o Promote urban birding, an up-and-coming hobby for people of color.
- o Increase engagement of minority youth in trail building programs.
- o Partner with Outdoor Afro program.
- o Coordinate with U.S. Forest Service programs like Urban Trails, Urban Treehouse, Neighborhood House, etc.
- o Coordinate with Centro Hispano, a Hispanic youth group with local activities that encourage outdoor skills.
- o Conduct market research to target and involve urban- and rural-based organizations like Big Brothers/Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs, Sunshine Coach, Boy and Girl Scouts, YMCA/ YWCA, 4H, City of Madison Recreation Department summer programs, and Future Farmers.
- o Develop a marketing campaign aimed at urban communities.
- o Participate in “mom blogs” that promote family activities and outdoor activities for families.

## Background Material

The material that follows summarizes the resource information collected during the development of this LRIP. It includes preliminary maps that identify specific features and locations where the six interpretive themes may be presented, as well as separate matrices for the geological, biological, and cultural resources found within the AGO trail segment. Both the maps and matrices can be used as the basis for planning interpretive programs and services, and to develop comprehensive theme maps that will identify precise locations for the placement of interpretive media and programs. Photographs of important sites found within the AGO project area are also located in this section.

*Photo courtesy  
of WDNR*





Table Bluff Segment of the Ice Age Trail, Dane County  
*Photo courtesy Ice Age Trail Alliance*