

**ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
TRAILWAY PLAN**

**Analysis of Alternatives
and
Environmental Assessment**

Waupaca and Portage Counties, Wisconsin

Prepared by

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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This document analyzes a proposal for routing and developing the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (NST) across Waupaca and Portage Counties, in central Wisconsin.

In October 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the Ice Age 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, primarily non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas and are patterned after the renowned Appalachian NST.

For a variety of reasons, Waupaca and Portage Counties were considered by the National Park Service (NPS), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation (IAPTF)--the three primary partners involved in the development and management of the trail--a priority area for planning the route of the trail through Wisconsin. By agreement among the three partners, the NPS took the lead in coordinating and facilitating the planning process to determine the route of the trail across the county. A planning team was formed to investigate corridor and trail route alternatives and conduct a public involvement process. Because of a long history of planning and development of the Ice Age NST in Portage and Waupaca Counties, only one corridor was identified (preferred alternative) which builds upon already completed segments of trail. The alternative of taking "no action" has been identified. An alternative of developing selected, discontinuous portions of the corridor was considered but rejected. A number of trail routes within the corridor were also identified and evaluated. Depending on where the trail is located, it may range in length from 50-55 miles. One preferred route within the corridor, based on a combination of alternatives, is recommended. However, the probability of the trail actually following this alignment, when constructed, is dependent on the willing cooperation of affected landowners.

The 1983 Comprehensive Plan for the Ice Age Trail states that the trail is primarily intended to be a hiking trail. This is for experiential reasons as well as the number of many private landholdings which the Ice Age NST must cross. Other compatible recreational uses are encouraged such as birdwatching and snowshoeing. In addition, the trail may accommodate

ungroomed cross-country skiing on segments that are designed and constructed for this use. Development of a low impact, foot travel only trail, using careful design and construction techniques, will result in no significant impacts to natural, cultural and, socioeconomic resources.

Developing and managing the Ice Age NST across Waupaca and Portage Counties may produce minor negative impacts. Negative consequences on the human environment are generally limited to a perceived increase in nuisance level. At public open house meetings, concerns were expressed about vandalism, littering, and access for crimes. Experience and formal studies have shown that these perceived impacts do not typically happen after a trail is constructed.

Positive benefits for trail users and neighboring landowners may include recreation and fitness opportunities. Other benefits include aesthetic beauty, open space, natural resource protection, and sometimes, higher property resale values. Local communities may also experience bolstered economies and increased local pride.

Written comments on the Trailway Plan and Environmental Assessment will be accepted by the NPS, for purposes of compliance with Federal requirements, and by the WDNR, for purposes of compliance with State requirements until February 7, 1997. Address your comments to:

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Analysis of Alternatives and Environmental Assessment

Waupaca and Portage Counties, Wisconsin

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