

Chapter 2

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

When Congress amended the National Trails System Act in 1980 to authorize establishment of the Ice Age Trail as a NST, it designated only a general route for the trail.

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the National Trails System Act (82 Stat. 919; 16 U.S.C. 1241), as amended, is further amended as follows:

(a)Section 5 (a) is amended by adding the following new paragraph at the end thereof:

(10) The Ice Age National Scenic Trail, a trail of approximately one thousand miles, extending from Door County, Wisconsin, to Interstate Park in Saint Croix County [should have read “Polk County”], Wisconsin, generally following the route described in “On the Trail of the Ice Age –A Hiker’s and Biker’s Guide to Wisconsin’s Ice Age National Scientific Reserve and Trail”, by Henry S. Reuss, Member of Congress, dated 1980.”

This general route identified for the trail across the state was then incorporated into the 1983 Comprehensive Plan For Management and Use of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (Comprehensive Plan). The maps in the plan frequently identify roads as “Connecting Road Segment to NST” where there was no actual “trail” in existence and no specific idea where an off-road trail could be established in the future. This alignment was displayed on the maps even though it was known that these road routes could not serve as the route of the Ice Age NST over the long-term. The Comprehensive Plan states that the Ice Age NST “should be a continuous overland (off-road) trail. The roads identified on the maps were “place holders” for a future alignment that would need to be determined through a detailed analysis. This planning work was identified as a priority action on page 50 of the Comprehensive Plan:

“1. Detailed planning for the location and construction of new trail segments needed to make the Ice Age NST a continuous off-road trail as identified in this plan should begin as soon as possible as a cooperative effort between the Ice Age Trail Council, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service.”

The purpose of the Corridor Planning Process is to identify and evaluate potential corridors where an overland route for the Ice Age NST could be established in Waushara County. A desirable location for the trail would meet the following objectives.

- Traverse a variety of glacial features that are located in a visually pleasing corridor.
- Provide for a diverse user experience by incorporating a variety of plant communities, terrain, open and enclosed spaces (ex. Forests, savannas, prairies).
- Provide vistas to broader landscapes for scenic and interpretive purposes.
- Link and protect significant geologic, biologic, and archeologic sites
- Link other significant natural resource areas.
- Connect or provide linkages to communities for user support purposes.
- If possible, use publicly-owned land for trail development and support facilities.

These alternatives must also occur within defined endpoints. These endpoints are located in the southern part of Waushara County at existing trail on the Chaffee Creek State Fishery Area, and on the county's northern border around Heffron where a Corridor of Opportunity for Portage and Waupaca Counties was approved in the late 1990s.

The terminal moraine is located on the west side of Waushara County with a series of recessional moraines spanning to the east behind it. The county also contains a number of public lands. The original idea for the trail was to meander the trail through this landscape using public lands as anchor points. For much of Waushara County, the Comprehensive Plan linked the area between these public lands with connecting roads that acted as "place holders" for a future off-road trail. During the 1970s, a few volunteers built a portion of the Ice Age NST as an off-road overland route on a very interesting piece of recessional moraine in the Town of Deerfield. This segment was identified in the Comprehensive Plan. This route was built with handshake agreements with landowners. Unfortunately, portions of it disappeared over the years for various reasons. Today, Waushara County has a dedicated, self-sustaining, and enthusiastic group of volunteers who are rebuilding sections of this route as well as other segments of the Ice Age NST that could be established on public lands. To complete the trail county-wide, a plan is needed that will provide guidance on where future segments should be established. Such a plan will help volunteers and other partners focus their efforts.

Locally, there is also support for the Ice Age NST. The Waushara County Parks Department has been enthusiastic about the development of the Ice Age NST for some time. Its incorporation into the Waushara County Outdoor Recreation Plan dates back to 1988 and has been included in updates prepared in 1994 and 2000. While the Waushara County Parks Department may actively assist with the development of the trail and intends to actively promote the trail in its literature, its present stance is that current funding levels prevent it from being involved with day-to-day trail maintenance responsibilities.

(Insert state map with Waushara County highlighted)