



**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2011-12

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Natural Resources...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

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INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

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DATE: 28 February 2011

TO: Representative Mursau and Members of the Natural Resources Committee

FROM: Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: Summary of Clearinghouse Rule 10-118 Relating to the Ice Age and North Country Trails

These proposed changes to Wisconsin Administrative Code provide guidance for the management of lands purchased for the Ice Age and North Country Trails. The proposed rules guide and permit some limited management of these lands such as selective timber harvest, invasive species removal, installation of the Ice Age and North Country Trails, and minor support facilities and amenities such as small gravel parking lots and informational kiosks, prior to master planning. This rule proposal would greatly facilitate the ability to manage these lands for their intended use (Ice Age & North Country Trail), and would allow the state's non-profit and federal partners, and volunteers, to most effectively and efficiently assist with that management.

For more information, please contact State Trails Coordinator Brigit Brown (in Madison): 266-2183; brigit.brown@wi.gov.



**Testimony Provided for Clearinghouse Rule 10-118
Relating to Ice Age and North Country Trails
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
By Brigit Brown – DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation
March 2, 2011**

Good Morning Chairman Mursau and Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources.

I am Brigit Brown, State Trails Coordinator for the Wisconsin State Park System at the Department of Natural Resources. With me is Daniel Schuller, Director of the Wisconsin State Park System.

We are here today to provide an overview of the proposed Administrative Rule changes regarding the Ice Age and North Country Trails.

The purpose of these proposals is to allow the department and our partners to perform basic management activities to preserve the landscape of the properties (invasive species removal, tree plantation thinning, planting of former crop lands) and provide basic amenities (constructed trail, small gravel parking lots, and informational kiosks) to facilitate public access to the properties for the purposes for which the properties were purchased.

The Ice Age and North Country Trails are National Scenic Trails, similar to the Appalachian Trail. They are also part of Wisconsin's State Trail system and the Department of Natural Resources plays a significant role in the creation of both of these trails.

The North Country Trail is a footpath that winds for approximately 200 miles through northern Wisconsin on its way from North Dakota to New York.

The Ice Age Trail, also a footpath, aims to preserve and interpret Wisconsin's unique glacial features. When complete, it will span for more than a thousand miles across the state and offer multi-day backpacking experiences. There are approximately 650 miles of trail now open. These rules will allow the department and our trail partners, the National Park Service and the Ice Age Trail Alliance, to manage and open to the public these properties for the purpose for which they were purchased, upon purchase.

These proposed Administrative Code changes relate mainly to management of the lands purchased by the state specifically for the Ice Age Trail. These properties are called State Ice Age Trail Areas, or SIATAs. The purpose of these SIATAs is to permanently protect segments of the Ice Age Trail in accordance with the goals and purposes of the Ice Age Trail: namely to provide premier hiking and backpacking experiences. The State currently owns 78 of these properties which average about 85 acres in size.

Currently, there is little to no management of these properties allowed prior to a formal master planning process which must take place in accordance with existing Administrative Code NR 44. Additionally, there is little guidance for master planning these properties (i.e. what it means for a property “to be managed for the Ice Age Trail”). The master planning process, including public involvement, will still occur and will address larger management issues for the property in the long-term.

These rules would provide guidance on the initial management of lands purchased for the Ice Age and North Country Trails. The proposed rules guide and permit some limited management of these lands such as selective timber harvest, invasive species removal, installation of the Ice Age and North Country Trails, and minor support facilities and amenities such as small gravel parking lots and informational kiosks, prior to master planning.

This proposal will compliment and reference the hunting access rules recently enacted for these properties (s. NR 10.275 (4)), and will facilitate the master planning process (ch. NR 44) for these properties but is not anticipated to directly affect existing policy. These rules will provide guidance similar to what exists for other department property designations such as State Wildlife Areas.

This rule proposal would greatly facilitate the ability to manage these lands for their intended use, and would allow our non-profit and federal partners to most effectively and efficiently assist us with that management.

This rule did go out to public hearing in the fall of 2010. All of the 142 comments received were in support of the rule. There were requests for some minor modifications to the rule by Ice Age and non-Ice Age Trail users. Modifications were incorporated into the proposed rules before you today in response to those requests.

We request your support of this proposed rule and will gladly answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time.

-Brigit Brown (brigit.brown@wisconsin.gov; 608-266-2183)

-Daniel Schuller (daniel.schuller@wisconsin.gov; 608-266-2185)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources





REMARKS OF THOMAS GILBERT, SUPERINTENDENT, ICE AGE AND NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS, TO THE WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO NR 1.29 AND NR 45.10 RULES AFFECTING THE ICE AGE AND NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS

March 2, 2011

Good morning; my name is Thomas Gilbert. I am the National Park Service Superintendent of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and North Country National Scenic Trail. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you and speak in support of the proposed rule changes to NR 1.29 and 45.10 as they affect the Ice Age and North Country National Scenic Trails.

There are only 11 National Scenic Trails in our Nation, and Wisconsin is home to all of one—the Ice Age Trail—and part of another—the North Country Trail.

The National Park Service—the federal partner in these projects—is extremely grateful to the State of Wisconsin and especially the Department of Natural Resources staff for the work you do—as the state partner—in helping to acquire, establish, manage, and protect these two nationally-significant trails. We are pleased that in the past 10 years we have been able to provide approximately \$14 million in financial assistance to Wisconsin for acquiring lands for these trails—funds that were secured through the efforts of our private partners—the Ice Age Trail Alliance and the North Country Trail Association.

Securing the necessary lands, however, is only part of the task. It is important that these lands be properly managed so that the Ice Age and North Country National Scenic Trails provide the outstanding hiking and backpacking experiences that they are intended to provide. This includes not only managing the use of these lands, but also the glacial landscape features and other natural and cultural resources in sustainable ways to ensure that these trails continue to provide superlative outdoor recreation experiences for future generations of users.

The proposed rules have been developed and refined over the past several years by the DNR staff. They have done an excellent job—hearing, understanding, and reflecting in the rules the needs and concerns of the National Park Service and the other partners in these trails. The proposed rules make provision for certain development and management activities prior to

formal master planning, such as trail construction, so that the properties do not lie utilized for the purpose for which they were acquired, while awaiting master planning.

The rules help clarify the primacy of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail in determining the appropriate management of State Ice Age Trail Areas, ensuring compliance with the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant requirements for properties acquired with that assistance. The rules provide an excellent framework for guiding the master planning for, and management of, these properties, addressing vegetative management, primary uses and activities, secondary activities that may be allowed, buffering the trail from other recreational activities that may be allowed, etc.

The rule authorizing dispersed camping on lands purchased for the Ice Age and North Country National Scenic Trails will help to facilitate enjoyment of the trails by long-distance backpackers—a category of users that was clearly in the mind of Congress in authorizing these long-distance, continuous trails.

We very much appreciate the work that has been done to prepare and propose these rules and urge your favorable consideration of them.

Thank you.