

Ice Age Trail Alliance, Inc.

Policy: Trail Layout and Design

Approved: Board of Directors

Effective Date: January 22, 2011

As Amended Through: April 18, 2024

Related Documents and Policies: Alliance By-Laws Article II, Section 17 (b); the National Trails System Act; the National Environmental Policy Act; the Ice Age National and State Scenic Trail Vision Statement and Attributes; Ice Age National Scenic Trail: A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance; the TRIAD Memorandum of Understanding;

Table of Contents

1.0	Background	1
2.0	Purpose.....	2
3.0	Authority for this Policy	3
4.0	Trail Layout and Design Process.....	3
5.0	Stakeholders	3
6.0	Trail Project Timeline	4
7.0	Appeal Process	6

1.0 Background

The Ice Age Trail Alliance Inc. is a nonprofit corporation whose mission is “to create, support and protect a thousand-mile foot path” known as the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (“Trail”).

The Trail was designated as a “National Scenic Trail” by Congress in 1980 under the National Trails System Act (“Act”). Section 2(c) of the Act states: “The Congress recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers and private, nonprofit trail groups have made to the development and maintenance of the Nation's trails. In recognition of these contributions, it is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails.” Section 11(a)(1) reiterates this point: “the Secretary of the Interior ... [is] authorized to encourage volunteers and volunteer organizations to plan, develop, maintain, and manage, where appropriate, trails throughout the Nation.” Section 7(a)(2) states: “In selecting rights-of-way for trail purposes, the Secretary shall obtain the advice and assistance of the States, local governments, private organizations, and landowners and land users concerned.”

Prepared by TRIAD partners the National Park Service (NPS), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and the Ice Age Trail Alliance (the “Alliance”) in 2000, the publication Ice Age National Scenic Trail: A Handbook for Trail Design, Construction and Maintenance states that the Trail (section 1-11) “is to be developed and managed as a premier hiking trail.”

In 2002, the TRIAD signed the Ice Age National and State Scenic Trail Vision Statement and Attributes, which states that the Ice Age Trail should be

(B) A meandering trail that maximizes the number and quality of diverse glacial landscapes... (C) The trail and trailway are designed elements within an overall planned and approved corridor of opportunity. The design of the preferred trail route...is tailored to highlight regional landscape features and is intended to preserve or afford views of geologic, natural, cultural, scenic and/or biotic resources and provide a variety of educational experiences for visitors in regard to these resources... (D) The trail lies lightly on the land. It generally follows natural contours, is constructed of local natural materials, and is a maintained pathway. (E) The trail and the trailway are managed and maintained in order to enhance users' experience. Trail quality, aesthetics, and vegetative management should be incorporated into the design and management of the trail..."

In April 2009 the Alliance membership approved a modification to Corporate By-Law, Article II, Section 17(b) which states:

"...Trail Chapters, as entities of the corporation, share in the responsibility for Trail development, layout, design, construction, and maintenance within their territorial jurisdiction as determined by the Board of Directors. These activities shall be done in accordance with the standards and agreements established for the Trail by the corporation and its federal and state partners, and in accordance with governmental laws and regulations. The Executive Director & CEO shall be responsible for ensuring that Trail Chapters, members, staff, and appropriate entities are represented and involved in this process before Trail projects are approved to proceed. Disagreements concerning Trail development, layout, design, construction, and maintenance may be appealed to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors."

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure coordination between Alliance chapters, staff, and volunteers, and between the Alliance and its partners, to ensure optimal, sustainable trail placement and compliance with the federal, state, and local agencies that retain environmental regulatory authority for earth-disturbing activities (Section 106 archeological and historic review), for the construction of wetland structures and bridges (Chapter 30, Army Corps of Engineers and county permits), and for threatened and endangered species (Section 7, Natural Heritage Inventory).

In April 2009 the Board directed staff to promulgate a Foundation (Alliance) policy that spells out procedures for the layout and design of the Trail for Board action. The policy would include a team approach involving appropriate stakeholders, "sign-offs" signifying agreement during the process, and an appeal process in case of disagreement.

3.0 Authority for this Policy

Authority for this policy is provided by the Alliance bylaws.

4.0 Trail Layout and Design Process

The art and science of Trail Layout and Design is an interdisciplinary amalgam that, in part, involves (i) reading the landscape, (ii) pre-visualizing future conditions, (iii) identifying opportunities and limitations, (iv) identifying natural and manmade systems, (v) anticipating trail user and diverse recreational user group psychology, (vi) being well-versed and experienced in sustainable trail construction and maintenance techniques, (vii) having the ability to simultaneously entertain yet distinguish between “Macro” and “Micro” trail development concepts and applications, (viii) exercising good communication and listening skills with stakeholders, (ix) having knowledge of existing and traditional land use in and around the project area, and (xi) identifying potential interpretive opportunities/sites/themes for development.

- A. Macro analysis refers to understanding the site in the context of the surrounding area and the features that make the site what it is. Macro analysis identifies how the property fits into the region and into any larger systems, whether natural or manmade.
- B. Micro analysis refers to determining where the actual centerline of the trail is placed. Micro Analysis objectives include creating a sustainable and premier hiking experience, providing trail users with an intimate, imaginative experience on the land, ensuring environmental protection, minimizing user conflicts, and providing for user safety.
- C. Trail Layout and Design should be done over the course of four or more seasons prior to the start of trail construction. Site visits by staff will be mutually coordinated between staff and chapter representatives to the extent possible.

5.0 Stakeholders

In addition to Alliance board, staff, members and the chapter in whose territorial jurisdiction said project is proposed to occur, stakeholders include but are not limited to: the landowner and/or managing authority of the property, TRIAD and local unit of government partners, other recreational groups with an established interest in the property, adjacent landowners and neighbors to the project area, and members of the assigned Project Team. All members of the corporation shall be encouraged to have knowledge of and access to educational documents and procedures relating to the Trail Layout and Design, construction and maintenance process.

- A. Designated chapter representatives should include the current Chapter Coordinator or duly chosen representative and at least one, but not more than three, additional chapter designees.

- B. Alliance staff representatives shall be assigned by the Executive Director & CEO or by his/her designee. The Alliance Director of Trail Operations is assigned lead responsibility for all Trail Layout and Design.
- C. Stakeholder sign-offs signifying agreements during the process are noted in subsections 6.1, 6.6 and 6.7 of this policy.

6.0 Trail Project Timeline

The Trail Project Timeline, which may, by NPS/Alliance agreement, be modified from time to time, describes, in sequence, the required internal and external approvals needed before trail construction projects can proceed. This includes but is not limited to the building or modification of wetland structures and bridges, trail relocations or improvements that exceed routine maintenance, and constructing or creating new trail. The Trail Project Timeline shall serve as the basis of procedures to be followed by Alliance staff, chapters, members and volunteers to ensure that all compliance requirements have been met, and the final trail alignment agreed to, prior to the Alliance initiating trail construction or improvement projects.

- A. **Wish List.** A project is placed on the Wish List when chapter and staff representatives concur that a proposed undertaking merits further consideration by TRIAD partners.

Chapter and staff concurrence of Wish List projects shall be documented in a staff-administered Project Tracking File.

- B. **Project Review Form.** Following one or more field visits to evaluate Wish List project site conditions and project viability, staff and volunteers shall work collaboratively to prepare, and staff shall submit, a preliminary Project Review Form for TRIAD partners' and appropriate agencies' review.

The preparation and submittal of a Project Review Form places the project(s) in queue for planning and compliance purposes. A final trail alignment centerline is not required at the time the preliminary Project Review Form is submitted for agencies' review. Trail Layout and Design is in the "Macro" phase at this juncture.

- C. Preliminary compliance requirement findings are reported to staff by TRIAD and partner agencies. Staff shall convey this information to the host chapter coordinator in a timely manner. The property manager and chapter membership shall be kept apprised by staff and/or the Chapter Coordinator as progress ensues.
- D. **Project Team.** By this juncture in the Trail Project Timeline, a Project Team should be established. The purpose of a Project Team is to work collaboratively with the staff and with the local chapter to develop and

implement agreed-upon project goals. Project Team composition may be adjusted for experience, balance and other considerations by the Director of Trail Operations, in consultation with the Chapter Coordinator. The Project Team Leader(s), the chapter representative(s) and additional project team roles depending on the proposed scope of work are determined. Trail Layout and Design and project updates shall be communicated to the chapter membership by the chapter representative(s) and/or staff on a regular basis.

- E. Staff submits a Request for Review to the WDNR Bureau of Endangered Resources. If bridge building or wetland structures are proposed, staff initiates WDNR/Army Corps of Engineers/County Agency approval(s). Staff shall record all compliance submittals and agency findings in the Project Tracking File. Macro Analysis moves to completion and Micro Analysis commences.
- F. Following agency review of the preliminary Project Review Form, if federal, state and local compliance requirements are deemed to be satisfied, and if the chapter, staff and the managing authority agree to the centerline of the trail alignment, the project is authorized to proceed. Sign-offs from the Chapter Coordinator, the Director of Trail Operations and the Managing Authority shall be required before trail construction begins. If agreement is not reached regarding Trail Layout and Design considerations or other project planning elements, an appeal may be submitted by either chapter or staff representatives per Section 7.
- G. A preferred trail alignment and alternative options have been identified and agreed to by staff, chapter representatives, the Project Team, and the managing authority. Chapter and staff sign-off is required. Staff then submits a FINAL Project Review Form and detailed map showing the preferred and alternative trail alignments to NPS and other agencies. Substantive changes to the trail centerline shall not occur beyond this juncture.
- H. The trail alignment is surveyed for Section 106 compliance. Staff finalizes Section 7 and Chapter 30 requirements with the appropriate agencies. Final micro adjustments may be made within the 25 feet from surveyed centerline allowance. Following what may entail a 30- to 45-day waiting period for Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office review and acceptance of Section 106 documentation submitted by the NPS, the project is ready for ground-disturbing activity and is approved to proceed.

7.0 Appeal Process

Upon written notice to the Executive Director & CEO that either entity in the dispute has come to an impasse, the Executive Director & CEO shall intervene. The chapter, staff, the Project Team and the Executive Director & CEO will make every effort to resolve collaboratively any disagreements regarding Trail Layout and Design issues prior to initiating the appeal process. In the event that a disagreement cannot be resolved after reasonable opportunity by the Executive Director & CEO, the Executive Director & CEO or the Chapter Coordinator shall declare an impasse. The Executive Director & CEO shall notify the Board President and the other party that an impasse has been reached.

The Board President shall convene the members of the Executive Committee and initiate the appeal process within ten (10) days of receipt of written notice of the dispute from the Executive Director & CEO.

- A. The appeal process must be based on the merits of the project. The Chapter Coordinator and the Director of Trail Operations, independent of each other, shall provide the Executive Committee with documentation that includes a brief written summary of the disagreement, and may include photos, maps, timeline of actions, documented approvals, regulatory conditions met or not met, the trail experience envisioned to result for users if one option is chosen over another, ongoing maintenance implications, trail sustainability, and any relevant supporting information.
- B. The appeal process team is comprised of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and may include participation by the managing authority of the property and TRIAD partners.
- C. A site visit by the appeal process team is mandatory. The appealing parties may each designate one representative to accompany the appeal process team site visit(s). Appellate representatives shall not have a vote in the decision.
- D. The appeal process must be completed within 30 days of the request for appeal.
- E. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final and bind all Alliance parties to the decision.
- F. The decision will be communicated to the Executive Director & CEO, the Chapter Coordinator and Project Team Leader within ten (10) business days of the site visit.
- G. In the event the project is cancelled, irrevocably delayed or substantively changed as a result of the dispute, the Executive Director & CEO or their designee(s) will notify all donors. Donor wishes with

respect to financial or in-kind donations given in support of the project shall be honored.