

Instructions for

INFORMATIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PRACTICABLE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS FOR RECREATIONAL TRAIL PROJECTS

Recreational trail projects are conducted by federal, state and local agencies, to provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Ideally, new or modified trails are planned and constructed to avoid crossing or impacting wetlands, but this may not always be possible for a variety of reasons. When wetland impacts cannot be avoided, a Permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) (for federal wetlands), and a Water Quality Certification from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) (for all wetlands) is required before starting work. The permit process requires applicants to submit a Practicable Alternatives Analysis (PAA) to explain why the preferred trail alignment is proposed, and why other alternatives are not practicable. And a permit cannot be granted if the project will have significant adverse impacts to wetland functional values.

These instructions are designed to assist applicants in completing the PAA questionnaire, which is part of the wetland application form, by identifying the project-specific information that should be included in response to each question. Providing a complete and detailed PAA will assist regulators in understanding your proposal fully, and allow prompt review of your permit application.

These instructions follow the format of the PPA questionnaire. Please include the following information in response to each PAA question:

I. Background/Description of Project

A. Describe the purpose and need for the project.

Most projects are intended to provide or improve recreational opportunities. Provide details to explain why the specific project is being proposed. Some examples include:

- Create a new connector trail between existing trail segments
- Consolidate existing separate snowmobile and ATV trails
- Relocate an existing trail to avoid adverse wetland impacts along existing trail

Identify any related forest, recreation, transportation or comprehensive plan.

B. Is your project an expansion of existing work or is it new construction? Explain.

Identify and provide details to explain whether your proposal is:

- Construction of a new trail
- Conversion of an existing road to trail use
- Maintenance of an existing trail
- Upgrade of an existing trail
- Relocation of an existing trail

C. When did you start to develop a plan for your project?

Describe the background and timing leading up to your application. Explain when project planning began, what early coordination with Corps or WDNR regulatory staff occurred, and whether grants have been applied for or obtained. Explain when resource assessments were conducted to identify and evaluate environmental resources that might be affected by

the project. Identify any deadlines for project completion. Identify any forest, recreation, transportation or comprehensive plan that supports the proposal, and provide dates and copies of relevant plan pages.

D. Explain why the project must be located in or adjacent to wetlands.

Provide details concerning existing trails and routes, design limitations, safety requirements, location of large and/or sensitive wetland and water resources, or other factors that support your preferred alternative.

II. Alternatives

Identify at least four alternatives that you have considered including your preferred alternative. The following alternatives should be evaluated for each wetland crossing:

1. Alternate location to avoid wetland impacts - for example, a different trail alignment or obtaining an upland easement;
2. Alternate design to minimize wetland impacts – for example, a span bridge instead of a puncheon or building a narrower structure;
3. No action – not pursuing the project;
4. Preferred alternative.

A. How could you redesign or reduce your project to avoid the wetland, and still meet your basic project purpose?

Identify what options have been evaluated to avoid both temporary and permanent wetland impacts. Examples could include relocating the trail, modifying the trail structure, or spanning the wetlands.

B. Other sites

1. What geographical area(s) was searched for alternative sites?
2. Were other sites considered?
3. Have you sold any lands in recent years that are located within the vicinity of the project? If so, why were they unsuitable for the project?

These questions mainly apply to new trails or long connector segments. Search a geographical area as large as your ownership or easement rights, including any access easements you have sought. Describe how you selected the proposed location, and what other sites were evaluated.

C. For each of the alternatives you identified, explain why you eliminated the alternative from consideration (include cost comparisons, logistical, technological, and any other reasons).

Provide a cost estimate for each wetland crossing alternative. For alternate locations, identify the approximate cost of an easement and/or additional trail miles that would be required. For alternative designs, estimate the construction cost including materials, installation, labor, and ongoing maintenance. Identify any logistical issues such as unstable soil types or additional wetland impacts, or technological issues such as heavy equipment requirements that were factors in eliminating the alternatives you did not select.

D. What are the consequences of not building the project? (include social and economic consequences):

Include relevant information regarding applicable regulations, safety requirements, trail user demand, local plan requirements, community goals for the project, etc.

If you have chosen an alternative that would result in wetland impacts:

E. Summarize why your alternative was selected.

Indicate why you selected the proposed location and design over the alternatives.

F. Explain what you plan to do to minimize adverse effects on the wetlands during your project (e.g. erosion control, best management practices, setbacks, etc.).

Explain minimization measures that will be incorporated into your project. Examples include crossing wetland at narrowest point, using narrowest trail width, narrowest corridor, minimal vegetation clearing, construction timing to avoid temporary wildlife impacts, construction during frozen ground conditions to minimize equipment impact, installation of erosion control, and seeding of disturbed soil.