Master Plan Variance

Property Name: Tuscobia State Trail

Date the Current Master Plan Approved: November 1984

Proposed Change to the Master Plan:

Provide winter season ATV/UTV use for up to 11.2 miles of the Tuscobia State Trail within Price County. Combined with the summer season use, the open and closed dates for ATV/UTV use within Price County is:

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Open to ATV/UTV use
May 1 – December 31
January 1 – March 15

Closed to ATV/UTV use
March 16 – April 30
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See Map 1 displaying current use and Map 2 displaying proposed use.

Approved: ____________________________ Date: __________
Administrator – Fish, Wildlife & Parks Division

April 2017
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Variance/Amendment Initiator or Author: Jeff Prey

Job Title: Planner - Bureau of Parks and Recreation Management

Supporting Approvals

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
Variance Author

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
District Trail Coordinator

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
Department Master Planning Manager

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
Property Manager

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
Regional Director

__________________________________________ Date: ________________
Program Bureau Director

Others with a special interest

Signature: __________________________________ Date: ________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________ Date: ________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________ Date: ________________
Title: ___________________________________________________________
The data shown on this map have been obtained from various sources, and are of varying age, reliability and resolution. This map is not intended to be used for navigation, nor is this map an authoritative source of information about legal land ownership or public access. Users of this map should confirm the ownership of land through other means in order to avoid trespassing. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding accuracy, applicability for a particular use, completeness, or legality of the information depicted on this map.
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Supporting Information

Purpose and need for the plan change (include background and history as appropriate):

Background:

The 74-mile long Tuscobia State Trail is on a former rail corridor running from Park Falls to the Wild Rivers State Trail just north of Rice Lake. The trail passes through part of the Flambeau River State Forest. The trail connects seven small communities in Barron, Washburn, Sawyer and Price counties, each providing year-round accommodations and services.

The Tuscobia State Trail is a year-round multiple use recreational trail that offers opportunities for ATVs/UTVs, snowmobiling, horseback riding, off-road bicycling and walking. Trail activities vary by the time of year and by county. The western end of the trail is part of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

The Price County section of the Tuscobia Trail is closed during the winter months to ATV/UTV use. This variance recommends expanding the months open for ATV/UTV use as to provide a seamless connector that is not available during the winter season to and from adjacent connecting trails, developed trailheads and links to important recreation support amenities in Park Falls (hotels, gas, food, entertainment, etc.).

Proposed open/closing dates on the Tuscobia Trail in Price County will closely mirror the other county operational dates for motorized trail use.

As shown on Maps 1 and 2, the total Tuscobia State Trail ATV/UTV use will be up to 64.6 miles. Listed below are the existing and proposed trail lengths by county and winter season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Existing Miles</th>
<th>Proposed Miles</th>
<th>Total Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washburn</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barron</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>64.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total Trail Length = 74.6 miles (includes 10 miles of trail in Barron County which does not allow ATV/UTV use)

The proposed plan change is supported by the property vision, goals and objectives.

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Goals of the Master Plan

To make available a 75-mile state trail for year-round use, which will provide safe two-way travel for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, hunting, trapping and *ATV use (via 1987 variance)*, and preserve the resource for present and future generations.

Objectives within the Master Plan

To provide the trail with necessary improvements that will accommodate the users. Included are the proper design, construction, signage and management of the trail facility.

Anticipated primary benefits of the proposed plan change

This will provide a seamless connector for ATV/UTV operators from the Tuscobia State Trail via county forest lands and local town road routes to the Wild Rivers State Trail and trails beyond.

An increase in year-round ATV/UTV use will benefit the communities that serve the trail through additional tourism revenue.

Additional anticipated benefits

Improved communication between snowmobile and ATV clubs via signage and volunteer patrol projects that both types of clubs have discussed at previous public meetings.

Unavoidable adverse impacts

There is a fear by local snowmobile interests that this could result in a deteriorated public perception, especially from landowners who currently allow snowmobile-only trails on their property. Price County snowmobile clubs are concerned with the potential of ATV/UTV users trespassing onto these private lands, resulting in possible termination of snowmobile trail agreements. There is, however, agreement with improving signage, increasing user education, and utilizing volunteer patrol presence to deter ATV riders from illegal behavior.

Summary of any alternatives considered

Alternatives considered for opening 11.2 miles along the Price County section of the Tuscobia Trail to winter ATV/UTV use are:

Alternative 1: Allow ATV/UTV use during the winter months (preferred)

Alternative 2: No-Action, continue to prohibit ATV/UTV use during the winter months

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Alternative 2 was not pursued. Winter closure would continue the current situation where adjacent county and club trail networks that allow winter ATV/UTV use either dead-end at or just cross the Tuscobia Trail. This results in confusion for winter ATV/UTV users entering the trail from adjacent local routes and trails. This situation also requires longer routes to services in Park Falls. In addition, trespass pressure will remain next to the trail and adjacent private property due to the difficulty of making connections without the use of the trail. This no-action alternative would most likely have a negative impact on the department and local economies supported by the motorized recreationist.

**Compatibility with statutes, codes and department policies**

This change is compatible with state statutes, codes and DNR policies.

**Federal aid limitations**

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund dollars were used to acquire the property. The proposed variance will not result in impacts to federal investments into the trail.

**Public review process**

Two meetings have been held in Park Falls (December 9, 2013, and October 24, 2014) discussing the additional winter month ATV/UTV use along the Price County segment of the Tuscobia Trail. Attendees included: area snowmobile clubs and ATV clubs, representatives from the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC), the Wisconsin ATV Association (WATVA), various Price County staff, DNR staff, and the general public.

**December 9, 2013**

This meeting was a noticed public meeting hosted by representatives of the Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation; Cameron Bump – NW District Trails Coordinator and Todd Hintz – Tuscobia State Trail Property Manager.

Winter season ATV/UTV use was the sole topic of discussion at the meeting. The meeting had 75 attendees and participated. Meeting attendees represented various snowmobile clubs, ATV clubs, and WATVA. In general, the proposed winter ATV/UTV use is supported by ATV users while a few individuals expressed concerned about ATV users ignoring signs and riding snowmobile trails on private lands. Further discussions brought out ideas of improved signage, increase officer presence, user education, and volunteer patrol presence to reduce illegal use.
Fourteen written comments were received at the meeting; 12 were in support while two opposed, seven additional comments of support were received via email after the meeting.

**October 24, 2014**
This meeting was hosted jointly by AWSC and WATVA to review numerous joint topics that also included an update on winter ATV/UTV use in Price County (*Meeting invites were sent throughout the snowmobile, ATV and local/regional communities*). Support for winter ATV/UTV usage was heard from both parties with limited concerns of potential illegal ATV riding on adjacent private property and connecting to snowmobile trails that don’t allow this use. Through additional meeting dialogue, both user groups agreed that those concerns can be mitigated by improved signage, user education, and volunteer patrol presence. *Comments were not solicited at this meeting.*

*Note: On December 16, 2014, Cameron Bump and Mike Repyak (former NW District Trail Coordinator) met with Price County snowmobile and ATV trail coordinators to discuss a range of trail topics. Winter season ATV/UTV use in Price County was discussed and Price County is not opposed to the addition of winter season ATV/UTV use on the Tuscobia Trail.*

**Description of the support and/or opposition to the proposal**

This proposal has the support of those attending the meetings, from the surrounding communities, and Price County. Additional trail connectivity and access to support services in Park Falls are the leading reasons for support. As previously mentioned, concerns regarding off-trail and spur trail use have been brought up, but as per meeting dialogue those concerns can be mitigated by improved signage, user education, and volunteer patrol presence.

Based on past public review, this proposal has support. However, we will summarize public input received during the upcoming public input session when it is completed.