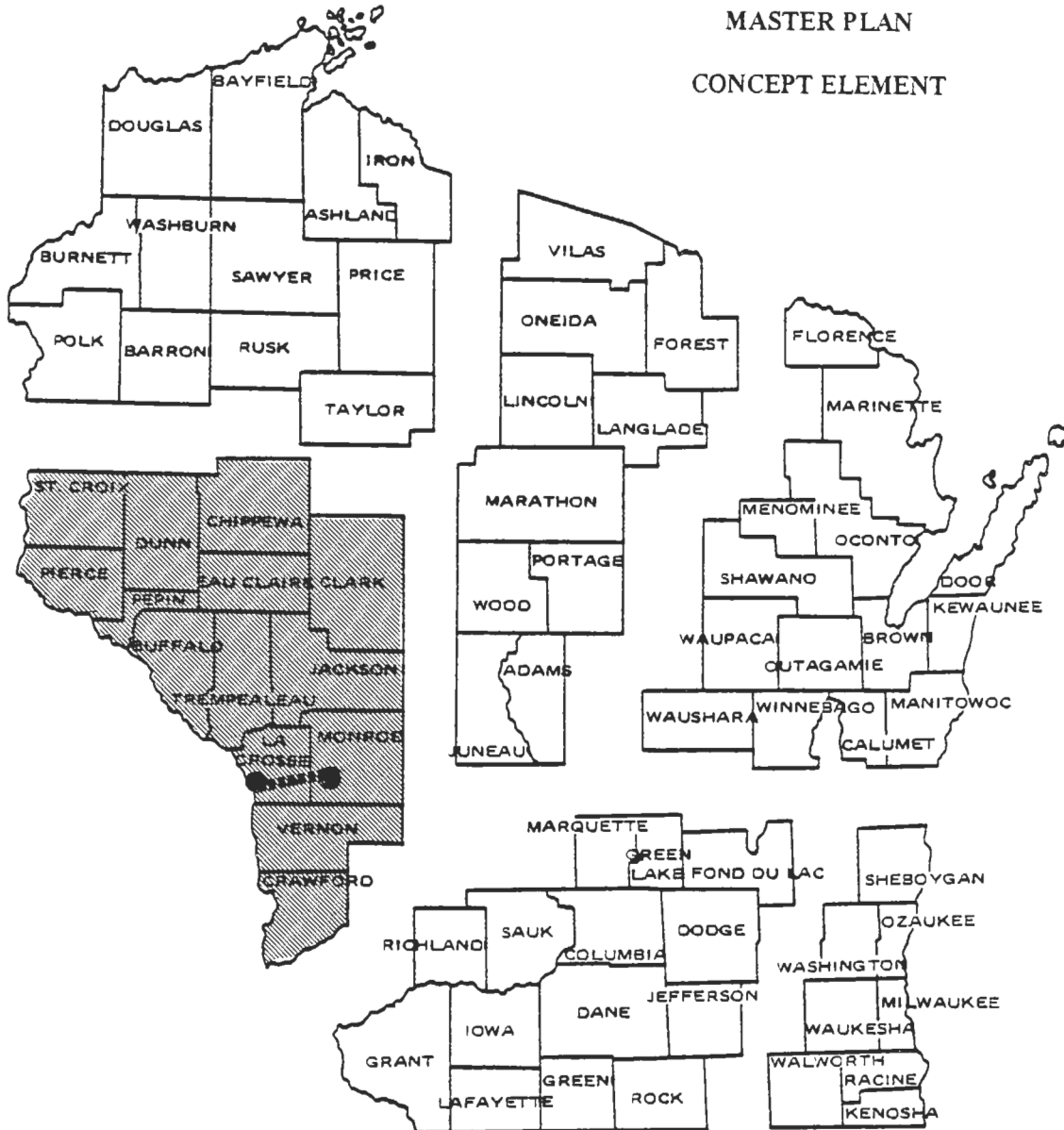


LA CROSSE RIVER STATE RECREATION AREA TRAIL

MASTER PLAN

CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Leader: Mike Ries, Park Planner
Ron Nelson, Park Manager
Ray Kyro, Wildlife Manager
Kenneth Wright, Fish Manager
James Melton, Forest Manager

Approved By: Natural Resources Board

Date: April 28, 1982

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I - ACTIONS

Page

A. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and ADDITIONAL BENEFITS. i

B. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT and DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM i

- 1. Development
- 2. Management
- 3. Land Acquisition
- 4. Estimated Development, Management, and Operations Costs

C. MAPS

- 1. State Locator Map
- 2. Trail Development Map

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION 5

- 1. Location
- 2. History of Area
- 3. Chronology of Property's Establishment and Development
- 4. Past and Present Management Activities

B. RESOURCE CAPABILITIES and INVENTORY 6

- 1. Geology
- 2. Soils
- 3. Water Resources
- 4. Vegetative Cover
- 5. Wildlife
- 6. Site Inventory
- 7. Land Use Inventory
- 8. Historical and Archaeological Features

C. MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS 7

- 1. No Existing Trail Access at Medary
- 2. Trespass
- 3. Bangor Vehicular Bridge
- 4. Trail Section East of Sparta
- 5. Trail is Adjacent to Active Milwaukee Road Track

D. RECREATION NEEDS and JUSTIFICATIONS 8

E. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES 8

- 1. Management
- 2. Development and Acquisition

SECTION III - APPENDIX

A. BOARD ACTION RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRAIL

B. STATUTE 23.091

C. COUNCIL COMMENTS and DEPARTMENT RESPONSE

SECTION I - ACTION

A. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, and ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Goal

To make available a 20.43-mile state recreation area trail for year-round use, which will provide two-way traffic for bicycling, hiking, and snowmobiling, as well as hunting in specific areas during specified periods of time, and to preserve the resource for present and future generations.

Annual Objectives

1. Provide a trail with the necessary improvements that will accommodate 40,000 bikers.
2. Provide winter use opportunities for 20,000 snowmobilers.
3. Provide opportunities for 1,000 hikers.
4. Permit 9,000 participant days of hunting for small game and deer.

Additional Benefits

1. Provide a year-round, off-road trail from La Crosse and adjacent communities to the Elroy-Sparta Trail and Wisconsin Bikeway System.
2. Accommodate an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 user-days for such activities as berry picking, bird watching, general nature study, and fishing in streams which are crossed by the trail.

B. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT and DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

It is recommended that the grade be classified as a state recreation area trail with a full complement of trail facilities. Surfacing, planking and railing of the bridges, and rest stops at major access points should be provided. In addition, small rest areas should be constructed in communities along the grade as needed.

Initially, the trail will be open for hiking, nature study, and snowmobiling, and as surfacing occurs for biking. Hunting will be allowed only during the regular open-hunting season. If conflicts develop, specific geographic and time zones for hunting and other uses will be implemented as provided in section 23.091 of the Statutes. For instance, hunting would be allowed only in those areas within or adjacent to public hunting areas.

Where the trail corridor continuity is broken due to site limitations, such as at West Salem, alternate routes for bicycles will be established utilizing existing roadways if possible. Contacts will continue with the Village of Bangor to resolve the problems associated with the wooden vehicular bridge which passes over the trail.

The 2.4-mile section of grade east of Sparta will remain closed until a need warrants its opening.

The Department should work with the Milwaukee Road on maintenance actions which will affect each other on the section of trail between Medary and Sparta. This is especially important as it applies to controlled burning and removal of debris at trestles over streams and drainage ways.

1. Development

Development of the 20.43-mile trail with a 100-foot right-of-way will be phased in accordance with available funding. The first phase of development will focus on preparing the trail for limited public use. Railings, curbing, and planking will be placed on existing railroad trestles. In addition, the trail will be marked with stop signs alerting users of public road crossings. Caution signs will also be erected on public roadways to alert motorists of the trail's crossing. Rocks, old ties, diseased and dead trees, as well as any remaining debris, will be removed if found to impact on the intensive recreation area of the trail.

The second phase of development will make the trail more convenient and enjoyable for public use. A trail tread 8 feet wide will be constructed with limestone screenings, and parking for approximately 105 cars will be provided at five locations. Four of these five areas will include toilets, wells, information signs, some tables, grills, refuse cans, and lighting for security purposes. Two of the four areas will have toilets and wells developed during phase II. The remaining development will occur during phase III.

Approximately 24 total miles of fencing including both sides of the trail will be required. This fencing will occur over a long-term period and be constructed on a priority basis, according to Department policy. In addition, selective vegetative management, including clearing of trees and brush, planting of trees, shrubs, and prairie may take place at selective sites along the grade to enhance vegetative diversity and maximize user experience.

Designation and possible development of a connector trail from the east end of the La Crosse River Trail to the Sparta terminus of the Elroy-Sparta Trail may be possible. If such an option materializes, there will be a need for acquisition, either fee title or easement, of a trail corridor. Presently, the Department has an agreement with the City of Sparta for an on-road trail connector using city streets. Similarly, there may be a possibility of buying additional railroad right-of-way on the east and west end of West Salem. If this is possible, additional land will be acquired and trail development will occur, thereby eliminating the need to route a portion of the trail on local road systems.

All areas proposed for development will be examined for the presence of endangered and threatened wild animals and wild plants. If listed species are found, development will be suspended until the District Endangered and Nongame Species Coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken.

2. Management

Currently, the trail is managed by the Wildcat Mountain Work Unit. Primary maintenance and law enforcement responsibility will be borne by the property superintendent and other Department personnel. Staff needed to manage the facility include a six-month seasonal and 640 man-hours of LTE, in addition to the work unit or property manager. A pickup truck or other vehicle, tractor with mower, hand mowers, chain saws, and other miscellaneous equipment which are on the Elroy-Sparta inventory will be shared between the two trails. The total personnel, equipment, and supplies to operate the trail is expected to cost approximately \$22,000 a year, based on 1981 cost figures. In addition, a radio system, which would include one mobile, one portable, and one base station at Sparta would be needed. The estimated cost of this radio system is \$5,000.

Note: If possible, a Supervisor I position would be placed at the Sparta substation, located at the Sparta terminus of the Elroy-Sparta Trail. This position would oversee both the Elroy-Sparta and the La Crosse River Trails.

A nonprofit organization, composed of people from villages along the trail, may be formed to provide bicycle rental, pickup, refreshments, lodging, and other services and amenities to trail users. Such groups could be stationed at the Sparta substation.

a. Vegetative Management

Vegetative management is needed to promote tree growth for shade, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat. In addition, remnant prairies and lowland areas are to be maintained for similar purposes. Improvement of the trail's grassland and prairie areas will maximize wildlife habitat. This is of particular importance as it applies to the Bangor public hunting grounds and Medary Marsh area. Controlled burning may be prescribed on the trail in conjunction with maintenance on the Milwaukee Road railroad line which shares the overall corridor.

A narrow strip of vegetation on either side of the surfaced trail tread will be controlled by mowing. Other vegetated areas along the right-of-way may be managed to assure the trail user vistas of the river, bluffs, and surrounding landscape.

If developments within sight of the trail occur which reduce aesthetic value, vegetative planting of native species will be incorporated on the trail right-of-way to screen such objects.

Since a complete biological inventory of the trail does not exist, it is recommended that an inventory be conducted as funds permit or through volunteer efforts by the University system.

b. Wildlife Management

It is recommended that approximately 25 wood duck nesting boxes be situated in suitable habitat along the trail. These would be situated primarily within the area of the Medary Marsh. Periodic removal of weed trees, such as box elder, should occur to release and stimulate shrub growth. In addition, selective brush management should be undertaken to improve food and cover for songbirds.

Public hunting areas along the trail should be carefully selected, periodically patrolled, and evaluated for use and potential conflict. Sufficient signing is important both for the trail user, hunter, and private property owner. In regard to the Bangor public hunting area, short-term leases are used. Approximately 8 miles of trail are bounded by the Bangor public hunting grounds.

Very little furbearer management will be possible, as most wetlands along the right-of-way are connected to private property. Beaver will be controlled to minimize damage on adjacent private lands. Periodic controlled burns of prairie plants will improve the quality of the prairie remnants and ensure pleasing aesthetics and good wildlife cover.

Implementation of the preceding items will be coordinated between Wildlife Management and the Parks staff.

In addition to the Bangor public hunting grounds, lands may be leased by Wildlife Management within the Medary Marsh as public hunting grounds. The facility would encompass approximately 3 miles of the grade.

c. Fish Management

There are very few water resources involved within the project boundary. Only a small number of trout streams flow under the trail. Dutch Creek, Fish Creek, Little La Crosse River, and Silver Creek are class II and III trout waters. Trout are stocked in all the trout streams listed. Management of trout within the 100-foot wide project area would be very limited and only include potential riprap around the bridge abutments. Fishing access will be provided by the trail crossings over the streams. No further access will be planned in association with the trail.

3. Land Acquisition

290.42 acres are currently state-owned. An additional 29.58 acres is needed at Medary Junction, West Salem, and Sparta for rest areas, terminus developments, and connector routes. The Natural Resources Board has approved an acreage goal of 320 acres.

The section of grade east of Sparta is 2.42 miles in length. It is not directly connected to any other trail and there is no identified need or demand for any type of use of that segment at this time. The trestles have been decked under the existing contract; however, upon completion, the segment will be closed for general public use until the need warrants its opening.

The Natural Resources Board approved purchase of the railroad grade in June 1978. A sum of \$282,000 was paid for the 290.42 acres within the 20.43-mile long railroad grade. The Department of Transportation purchased a number of small segments of rights-of-way where the right-of-way crossed roadways. Specifically, the Department of Transportation purchased land where the grade passed under Interstate 90, intersects with Highway 162 in Bangor, and intersects with Highway 71 and 16 east of Sparta. The acreage purchased by DOT is 3.59 acres. An agreement between DNR and DOT provides for DNR use of these highway crossing areas.

In the event the Department of Transportation needs the land for highway purposes, those segments of trail will be vacated or relocated at the Department of Natural Resources' expense, within six months following the date of such notice. However, if this occurs, the Department of Transportation agrees to provide alternative routes for the purpose of maintaining trail continuity so long as it is compatible with highway uses.

In June 1980, the Department of Natural Resources acquired an additional 4-1/2 acres of land in fee title and easement from the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Transportation Company. These parcels will extend the La Crosse River Trail into the City of West Salem from the east and west on sections of right-of-way that were not formerly abandoned. Due to natural features, such as wet areas and steep topography, the corridor may only be usable by snowmobilers and hikers. An agreement between the Department and local governments may be needed to route bicycles on existing roadways to bypass this area.

A land-use agreement is being formulated with the Village of Rockland for the extension of May Street. The Village and developer will be submitting a plan for our review and action.

The Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company assigned a number of leases to the Department of Natural Resources in conjunction with the sale of the grade. The majority of these are for minor storage, garden sites, or driveways.

4. Estimated Development, Management, and Operation Costs (1981 dollars).

a. Development

Phase I

Trestle decking and minor cleanup \$ 43,874

Phase II

1. Trail cleanup and brushing	\$ 10,000
2. Fencing - 8 miles at \$3,500/mile	\$ 28,000
3. Signing, including entrance, informational and trail signs	\$ 6,000
4. Connector trail development at Medary Junction, West Salem, and Sparta	\$ 8,000
5. Surfacing trail, 20.45 miles at \$5,000/mile	\$102,500
6. Five gravel parking lots (105 stalls total)	\$ 15,750
7. Five dusk-to-dawn lighting systems, one each at each of the parking lots	\$ 5,000
8. Two 4-unit pit toilets, one each at Medary Junction and Sparta	\$ 28,000
9. Two wells and hand pumps at \$4,000/each	\$ 8,000
10. Site preparation and landscaping for rest areas	\$ 5,500
11. Miscellaneous trail facilities, including picnic tables, grills, refuse cans, signs	\$ 1,000
12. Selective vegetative clearing and planting	\$ 3,000
Total Phase II development costs	\$220,750

Phase III

1. Asphalt 90 parking stalls at 4 lot locations	\$ 13,500
2. Fencing - 16 miles at \$3,500/mile	\$ 56,000
3. Two four-unit pit toilets	\$ 28,000
4. Two wells and hand pumps	\$ 8,000
5. Rest area site preparation and landscaping	\$ 5,000
6. Miscellaneous support facilities, such as picnic tables, grills, refuse cans, etc.	\$ 1,000
7. Selective vegetative clearing and planting	\$ 3,000
Total Phase III development costs	\$114,500
Total Project Cost (based on 1981 cost figures)	\$379,124

b. Management and Operations

The projected cost for managing and maintaining the trail once it becomes operational is as follows:

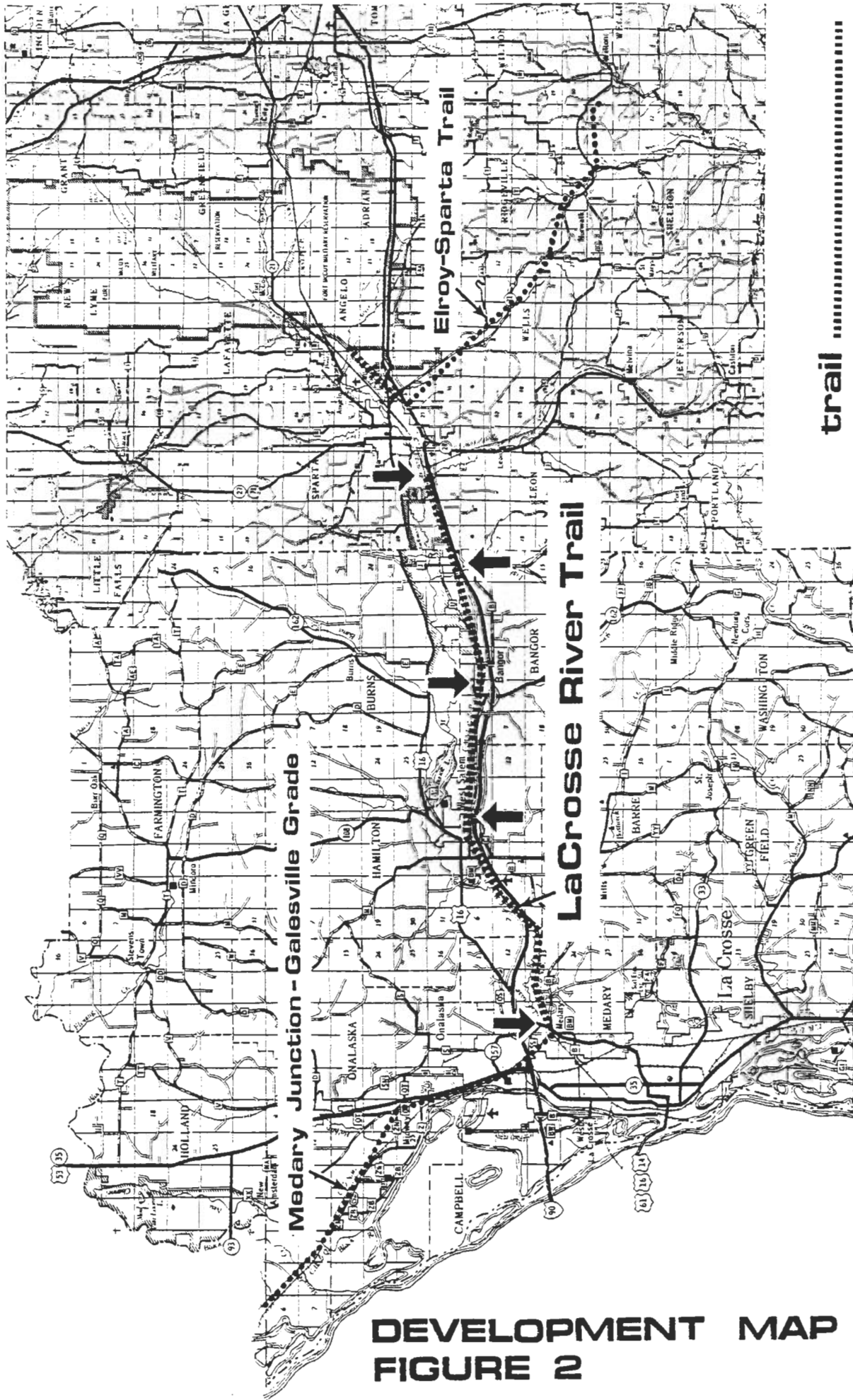
Six-month seasonal and 640 man-hours of LTE	\$ 8,800
Maintenance vehicles and travel	\$ 8,200
Services and supplies	\$ 6,000
Total Expenditure	\$22,000
Capital purchase of a radio system (one time)	\$5,000

Note: Personnel needs are contingent upon getting a Supervisory I position located at the Sparta substation. The salary for this position would have to be divided proportionately between the Elroy-Sparta and La Crosse River Trails.

- 1. Tuscobia - 72 Mi.
- 2. Bearskin - 25 Mi.
- 3. Ahnapee - 15 Mi.
- 4. Sugar River - 23 Mi.
- 5. Elroy-Sparta - 32 Mi.
- 6. Red Cedar - 13 Mi.
- 7. Pecatonica - 17 Mi.
- 8. Buffalo River - 36 Mi.
- 9. LaCrosse River - 20 Mi.



STATE LOCATOR MAP
FIGURE 1



**DEVELOPMENT MAP
FIGURE 2**

trail
 rest area-parking ↑
 ↑ n
 miles 0 4 8

LaCrosse River Trail

SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Location

The proposed trail is located on an east-west access in West Central Wisconsin, within Monroe and La Crosse Counties.

Beginning at the west boundary lines of Fort McCoy, the trail proceeds west 2.4 miles to Highway 71. At this point, the corridor ends as the segment through the City of Sparta has not been abandoned. From the western edge of Sparta, the grade continues in a westerly direction 18 miles to its terminus at Medary Junction. It passes through the Villages of Rockland, Bangor, and West Salem.

a. Relationship to Highways

Major travel routes include Highway 16, 21, I-90, and I-94. Interstate 90 and Highways 16 and 21 generally parallel the grade from Sparta to Medary Junction. Other major access routes running in a north-south direction include Highway 53 through La Crosse (Great River Road), Highway 108 through West Salem, Highway 162 through Bangor, and Highway 27 - 71 through Sparta.

b. Relationship to Population Centers

In relationship to population centers, the trail's western terminus is a few miles east of La Crosse, 26 miles east of Winona, Minnesota, 150 miles southeast of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and 87 miles south of Eau Claire. The grade's eastern terminus is Sparta, which is approximately 100 miles from Madison, 170 miles from Milwaukee, 170 miles from Green Bay, and 250 miles from Chicago. There are over two million people living within a two-hour drive of the trail.

2. History of the Area

The railroad grade was constructed in the late 1800's. The line has been used by Chicago and Northwestern to service the trade, factories, and agricultural needs of adjacent communities. Years ago the line also transported passengers. The railroad line remaining within this general corridor will continue freight and passenger service.

3. Chronology of Property's Establishment and Development

Aug. 6, 1976	Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company petitioned abandonment with ICC.
Nov. 1976	Department completed state trail feasibility study.
Sept. 19, 1977	Interstate Commerce Commission approved abandonment petition.
1978	Public meetings and hearings were held with local government officials and citizens to discuss the trail proposal.
March 1978	Natural Resources Board gave tentative approval for purchase and establishment of the trail.
April 1978	Natural Resources Board reaffirmed position to establish trail.
May 1978	Public hearings in Bangor.
June 1978	Natural Resources Board established trail and approved purchase of the railroad property.

4. Past and Present Management Activities

Upon assumption of ownership, the Department closed the grade to public use. The grade was signed to restrict public entry. It will remain closed until first phase development, including planking and railing trestles, and general cleanup is completed. This work is expected to be finished by the summer of 1981. The Wildcat Mountain Work Unit Leader, stationed at Wildcat Mountain, is responsible for management of the trail. Presently, the trail is being operated under reduced operation status due to budgetary limitations.

B. RESOURCE CAPABILITIES and INVENTORY

1. Geology

In Monroe and La Crosse Counties, rocks and minerals have a profound influence on the topography, soils, and water. The Wisconsin glacier missed these counties. This is evident by the lack of lakes, undrained depressions, glacial till, and moraines within this area.

The oldest underlying rock formation is Precambrian granite. Proceeding upward from the granite, the deposits become younger sedimentary formations. These consist of Cambrian sandstone and Prairie du Chien dolomite. Geologic erosion has removed most of the dolomite north of the La Crosse River; however, south of the river, dolomite still underlies the high, round-top ridges.

2. Soils

Soils in the vicinity of the grade, within Monroe County, are medium to coarse textured, very permeable, and underlain by sand and/or sandstone. Soils series include Hixton, Boone, and Gale. Soils along the grade within La Crosse County include nearly level Plainfield soil near Rockland, sandy Hixton soils near Rockland and Bangor, silty soils within valleys and benches including Richwood, Toddville, and Port Byron between Bangor and the Medary Marsh. Plainfield and Sparta soils are located in the Medary Marsh. The rail line is located on a grade composed of rock and cinder ballast.

3. Water Resources

There are very few water resources involved within the project boundary. However, there are a number of trout streams flowing under the trail. Waters located near or within the project boundary are the La Crosse River, Bostwick Creek, Dutch Creek, Fish Creek, Little La Crosse River, Silver Creek, and Creek 14-6. The La Crosse River flows parallel to the project area for nearly its entire length but never bisects or flows into the area. Bostwick Creek flows under the trail. This section of stream is non-trout water.

Dutch Creek flows under the trail in the City of Bangor. This section of stream is class II brown trout water. The species found in this section of stream are brown trout, white sucker, creek chub, blacknose dace, big mouth shiner, Johnny darter, sand shiner, spot-tailed shiner, flathead minnow, and bluntnose minnow.

Fish Creek flows under the trail near the Village of Rockland. This portion of stream is class III brown trout water. Fish species found in this section are brown trout, white sucker, creek chub, common shiner, bluntnose minnow, central mud minnow, Johnny darter, redbelly dace, and blacknose dace.

The Little La Crosse River flows under the trail west of the City of Sparta. This section of stream is class III brown trout water also. Fish species found in this section of stream are brown trout, white sucker, carp, and creek chub.

Silver Creek flows under the trail just west of Fort McCoy Military Reservation boundary. This section is class III brown trout water. Fish species found are rainbow, brown, and brook trout, white sucker, pumpkinseed sunfish, sculpin, Johnny darter, and brook lamprey.

Creek 14-6 is a warm-water tributary which passes under the trail east of Medary. This is a non-trout stream with forage species such as creek chub and redbelly dace.

No endangered or threatened species of fish, amphibians, or molluscs are known to be present on the property.

The La Crosse River Fisheries Area is located about 3 to 4 miles from the east end of the trail.

4. Vegetative Cover

The original forest cover was not forest at all, but oak savannah prairie. Present forest cover is a transitional southern hardwood complex less than 20 years of age. Due to clearing projects and fires within the railroad right-of-way, the timber types are even aged. Unless otherwise manipulated, much of the area will be invaded by trees and shrubs. Of particular interest is the large prairie remnant located two miles either side of the Village of Rockland. In addition to these, there are many other scattered prairie remnants along the trail from Sparta to the Medary Marsh. These high quality remnants should be preserved to provide research, educational, and public enjoyment opportunities. Major tree and shrub species within the right-of-way are box elder, elm, white and red oak, sumac, and alder.

No endangered or threatened species of wild plants are known to be present on the property.

5. Wildlife

The La Crosse River Trail contains a wide variety of vegetation and wildlife. Both game and non-game wildlife abound along the right-of-way. Animals, such as whitetailed deer, squirrel, rabbit, possum, raccoon, and smaller mammals are predominant with occasional muskrat, beaver, and mink present along the rivers and streams. Aquatic bird and animal species frequent the wetlands of the Medary Marsh and other wetlands. There are no endangered or threatened species known to be present or near the proposed trail.

6. Site Inventory

Land classification within the corridor includes upland brush, lowland brush, grass, remnant prairie, swamp, and water. There are no commercial timber types along the trail corridor. A breakdown of the land use cover types include: upland brush - 36 acres; lowland brush - 35 acres; grasslands - 65 acres; marsh and swamp - 95 acres; and remnant prairie - 60 acres.

7. Land-Use Inventory

The area utilized by the surfaced trail portion of the right-of-way, rest areas, and terminus development will be classified intensive recreational development (IRD).

It is also recommended that until a large prairie remnant located two miles either side of the Village of Rockland is surveyed to verify it's current condition, this segment of right-of-way be classified as either public use natural area (N) or scientific area (S).

The remaining area within the trail corridor will be classified as extensive recreational area (ERA).

8. Historical and Archaeological Features

There are no known historical and/or archaeological features within the grade based on available resource publications. The State Historical Society has been contacted and they have not identified any sites within the state ownership.

C. MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

1. Lack of Access at Medary Junction

Major concerns relate to trespass, security, and access for emergency vehicles and fire control from the La Crosse end (Medary Junction) terminus of the La Crosse River Trail. Due to high land values and lack of available sites, the Department is experiencing difficulty in acquiring a parcel for access and terminus development.

In a related matter, the presence of lowlands, steep topography, and standing water within the 25-foot parcel the Department purchased on the abandoned rail corridor, both east and west of West Salem, pose development and use problems. Subsequent contact with the railroad company to acquire additional right-of-way indicated that further land sale is not likely due to the need to store rail cars on the track.

2. Trespass

There were a number of small garden plots, driveways, and storage leases transferred from the railroad to the Department upon state acquisition of the grade. Although these do not seem to be involved matters, they will take time to make sure that the lessees understand that the Department owns the land and agreement will have to be reached for future use. The largest lease, for the Bangor Creamery, will be disposed of with the sale of the property to the creamery owner.

3. Bangor Vehicular Bridge

There is a wooden vehicular bridge within the Village of Bangor just west of the creamery. The Department did not buy the bridge upon acquisition of the railroad grade. The Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company retains ownership of the bridge. The structure may need repair, maintenance, or removal in the future if the village street is to remain open. To this date, the village still maintains that the Department or the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company has responsibility for the bridge. The Department maintains that, by law, it cannot maintain that structure.

4. Trail Section East of Sparta

The 2.42 miles of grade purchased east of Sparta remains a potential problem area. There is no current or foreseen demand for snowmobile trail routing or bicycle trail use at this time. The trestles on that stretch of trail have been decked under the current project. Due to its location away from the Elroy-Sparta Trail, and major parts of the La Crosse River Trail, it is expected that incompatible uses such as trail bike or motorcycle use will occur and lead to potential enforcement problems.

5. Trail is Adjacent to Active Milwaukee Road Track

The maintenance activities of the Milwaukee Road will have an impact on the trail. Burning of the right-of-way, debris removal at stream culverts, and general vegetation management are examples of railroad activities which will have an affect on Department operations of the trail.

D. RECREATIONAL NEEDS and JUSTIFICATIONS

1. Current and Projected Needs Analyzed From State Plan

The 1977 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Region 4, which includes Crawford, Vernon, La Crosse, and Monroe Counties notes that there is a need for hiking, biking, and winter use trails. Substantial pressure for recreational sites exist from the La Crosse area. The following summaries of the three recreational activities is listed in the 1977 plan and are as follows:

By 1995, Region 4 will need an additional 60 kilometers (36.3 miles) of hiking trails, 290 kilometers (180.1 miles) of bicycling trails, and 390 kilometers (242.2 miles) of snowmobile trails. Though use figures for cross-country skiing were not presented, it is recognized that this is a rapidly growing recreational activity and must be considered in the planning process.

2. Current and Projected Needs as Refined in Local Plans

Participation data compiled by the Bureau of Planning for Monroe and La Crosse Counties indicate that few residents participate in hiking for more than 4 hours in a single outing. Bicycling facilities for both present and future needs were described as adequate in the 1972 La Crosse County plan and more than adequate in 1976 Monroe County plan. Snowmobiling was not considered in the La Crosse County plan, and the Monroe County plan indicated that public and private snowmobile trails were adequate to meet present and future demands. The reason for the discrepancy between the projected need presented in the State Outdoor Recreation Plan for Region 4 and that presented in the La Crosse and Monroe County recreation plans is unknown.

E. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

1. Management

a. Designate as a State Park Trail

As a state park, the entire 20.43-mile trail could be managed to allow for a wide variety of recreational activities. However, hunting and trapping would be prohibited in conformance with section 29.57(4) of the Wisconsin State Statutes.

b. Designate as a State Recreation Trail

As a state recreation area authorized under Statute 23.091, the trail could be managed to provide a full range of recreational and educational uses, including hunting. Use zones could be established with rules adopted to control activities within the zones, as well as limit the number of people using any particular zone. A copy of Statute 23.091 is in the appendix.

2. Development and Acquisition

a. Leave the Trail In an Undeveloped Condition

Although the right-of-way has been acquired, this alternative would provide for no further acquisition and no development. The Department would merely retain the right-of-way for future use. This alternative is not desirable since the grade was acquired for recreational purposes. Further, such an approach could lead to safety, trespass, and encroachment problems, as well as degeneration of the resource.

b. Limited Trail Development

By acquiring rest area and terminus development land, the Department could provide a 20.43-mile corridor for limited recreational use. Such activities such as hiking and snowmobiling in winter could be enjoyed without trail surfacing.

A decision to provide only parking and rest areas at major access points could also be made. Toilets, wells, and other facilities would be provided at these locations. Planking and railing of bridges would also occur.

c. Full Trail Development

1) Trail Facilities

This alternative would provide for a full complement of trail facilities for use by bikers, hikers, and snowmobilers. The trail would be surfaced, the bridges planked and railed, rest stops would be provided at major access points, as well as at communities along the trail. Toilets, water, and picnic tables would be provided at all major rest stops. The use of local community facilities does not appear to be feasible, based on past contacts with village and city officials. However, if such facilities are made available in the future, they should be utilized rather than constructing new ones.

2) Campground Development

Although it would be desirable to locate a campground on the trail due to the growing popularity of bicycle and backpack camping, present campsite availability and economic considerations make this impractical. State campground facilities should not be developed (with the possible exception of a small, rustic area for hikers and bikers) until such time as existing public and private campground facilities have an opportunity to meet the demand. The Sparta terminus of the Elroy-Sparta Trail has a campground which could be used in conjunction with this trail.

3) Connector Trail Development

La Crosse County wants to make a connection to the grade from Veteran's Park, which is located in Section 5 of Hamilton Township, La Crosse County.

This and other trail connectors will be evaluated and acted upon on an individual basis. The Department of Natural Resources may assist in these projects by providing technical advice and other information as requested. The trail will serve as an integral part of the La Crosse County Snowmobile Trail network from Medary to Rockland.

4) Other Development and Use

Cross-county ski trail guidelines recommend that one-third of the trail be uphill, one-third downhill, and one-third level. The proposed trail is entirely level and would be suitable, but not ideal, for cross-country skiing. If the popularity or feasibility of snowmobiling diminishes in the future due to the scarcity or high cost of petroleum products, the trail could be converted to cross-country ski use without incurring any additional development cost. Both snowmobile and cross-country skiing should not be designated on the same trail due to obvious user conflicts.

Horseback riding is not compatible with bicycling and hiking. Horses create a maintenance and potential erosion problem to the trail surface because of the natural gouging rotation of the animal's hooves. This action destroys the smooth surface needed for bicycle tires and for hiking.

Recreational vehicles, such as motorcycles, mini-bikes, four-wheel drive vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, etc., are incompatible with bicycling and hiking during the snow-free seasons for safety reasons. Furthermore, constant use of some off-the-road recreational vehicles could cause plant damage and destruction of trail tread. Since the trail crosses waterways, it is of concern that erosion of the trail tread could cause siltation and turbidity of surface waters. In addition, the use of motorized recreational vehicles on the trail could increase air and noise pollution.

A final trail use consideration is that of hunting. As stated earlier, section 29.57(4) of the Wisconsin Statutes, prohibits small game hunting and trapping on state park lands. Deer hunting could be permitted if NR 10.27, Wisconsin Administrative Code, was amended. Because this trail could be classified as a recreational area trail, and because of possible use and safety conflicts between bikers, hikers, snowmobilers, and the hunters along certain segments of the trail, alternative land-use management measures should be available to reduce or eliminate conflicts if they become apparent or develop. Such measures could provide for closing the trail to hunting during specified times in specified areas. In addition, the trail could be closed to bicycling and other uses in areas open to hunting. Similarly, snowmobiling could be prohibited until after the close of deer hunting or small game hunting seasons if it becomes necessary.

797L

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Madison, Wisconsin

ITEM RECOMMENDED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA

TO THE SECRETARY:

Date July 13, 1978

FROM: James R. Huntoon

SUBJECT: Approval to purchase abandoned railroad grade between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy and establish acreage goal of 320 acres for a state trail.

1. To be presented at July Board meeting by Jim Huntoon.

2. Appearances requested by the public:
Name _____ Representing whom? _____

3. Reference materials to be used:
Two memorandum, map, (Village of Bangor resolution)

4. Summary: At the June 1978 meeting, the Board established a state trail on the abandoned railroad grade between Medary Junction, and the west boundary of Fort McCoy; directed the Department to negotiate the purchase of the real estate involved; and approved a resolution of necessity to initiate eminent domain proceedings in the event negotiations fail.

Agreement has been reached with the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company to purchase the abandoned railroad grade.

The grade will be an excellent addition to the state trail system as it will tie in with the Elroy-Sparta Trail.

5. Recommendation: That the Board approve an acreage goal of 320 acres for the state trail between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy and APPROVED: authorize the purchase of the abandoned grade for \$282,000.

Mr. Besadny Administrator Date 7-13-78

Mr. Damon Administrator Date

Secretary Anthony S. Earl Date

Signed: James R. Huntoon
James R. Huntoon, Director
Office of Lands

- cc: D. Mackie - 8
- D. Konkol - 8
- E. Faber - 7
- J. Huntoon - 7
- J. Scullion - 14
- J. Lissack - Eau Claire

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Madison, Wisconsin

ITEM RECOMMENDED FOR NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA

TO THE SECRETARY: Anthony S. Earl

Date June 13, 1978

FROM: D. J. Mackie

SUBJECT: Establishment of a state park trail between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy.

1. To be presented at June Board meeting by Don Mackie.

2. Appearances requested by the public:

Name

Representing whom?

3. Reference materials to be used: Map, Memorandum, Feasibility Study, and Resolution of Necessity.

4. Summary: At the March and May 1978 meetings, the Board authorized the Department to proceed with the acquisition of the abandoned C&NW railroad grade between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy subject to a good title report and a mutually acceptable purchase price.

The railroad has since let a salvage contract on this grade to remove the trackage plus the bridges, trestles and culverts. The State has obtained an injunction which preserves the bridges until July 15, 1978. The state's interest is not protected by the injunction after that date.

5. Recommendation: That the Board (1) establish the abandoned railroad grade between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy as a state park trail and direct the Department to negotiate the purchase of the real estate involved and APPROVED: (2) approve the attached Resolution of Necessity to authorize the state to institute eminent domain proceedings if negotiations fail.

C. D. Besadny 6-13-78
C. D. Besadny, Administrator Date

Anthony S. Earl 6-14-78
Deputy Secretary Date
Secretary Anthony S. Earl Date

Signed: D. J. Mackie
D. J. Mackie, Director
Bureau of Parks & Recreation

James A. Kurtz 6/19/78
James Kurtz Date

- Attach _____
- cc: D. J. Mackie - 8
J. Scullion - 14
R. Henneger - 13
J. Lissack - Eau Claire
D. L. Weizenicker - 8
D. W. Konkol - 8
J. R. Huntoon - 7
E. J. Faber - 7

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: June 13, 1978

File Ref:

To: Anthony S. Earl - 14

From: D. J. Mackie *DJM*

Subject: A. Establishment of a State Park Trail Between Medary Junction and the West Boundary of Fort McCoy
B. Resolution of Necessity

Attached is a copy of a feasibility study of the Tunnel City-Medary Junction abandoned C&NW railroad grade for state recreation trail purposes. The study was made for the grade from Medary Junction to Tunnel City, however, recent Board action deleted that portion of the grade from Tunnel City to the West Boundary of Fort McCoy.

Background

At the March 1978 meeting, the Natural Resources Board instructed the Department to enter into negotiations with the railroad subject to a favorable title report and a mutually acceptable purchase price. The Board also gave approval for DOT to exercise the State's first right to acquire the abandoned right-of-way. At the May 25, 1978 meeting, the Board reaffirmed its previous action, excluded the Fort McCoy segment and authorized the Department to take whatever actions are appropriate in cooperation with DOT and the Attorney General to protect the Board's interest in acquiring this grade for state trail purposes.

The Department of Transportation conducted a public hearing in Onalaska on January 18, 1978 to determine local opinion regarding purchase of the grade for transportation, recreation or scenic purposes. Approximately 50 people attended the hearing with a number of groups supporting a state trail including the La Crosse County Board, La Crosse Parks Board, Parkway Commission, Snowmobile Association and local snowmobile clubs. The Town of Bangor and Village of Bangor indicated an interest in purchasing the right-of-way in their jurisdictions.

DNR personnel have met with officials of municipalities located along the grade and, while no official action was requested or taken, local officials appeared receptive to the trail proposal. On May 16, 1978, Department personnel met with the Post Commander at Fort McCoy. Though not taking an official position, he indicated that the operation of a recreation trail through Fort McCoy would not be compatible with the military mission.

A public informational meeting was held in the Village of Bangor on May 24, 1978 to receive comments and input from local people regarding the trail proposal. Approximately 80 people attended and a show of hands at the end of the meeting indicated 41 in favor and 14 in opposition. The majority of comments received were favorable.

On May 16, 1978, the Department became aware that a salvage contract had been let for removal of the bridges and trestles. At the request of the Attorney General, on May 22, 1978, in La Crosse County Circuit Court, the Court issued a temporary restraining order enjoining Bernard Eckert and Chicago and North Western Transportation Company from removing the bridges and culverts. On June 1, 1978, in La Crosse County Circuit Court, Judge Pappas issued a 45-day injunction enjoining Bernard Eckert and Chicago and North Western Transportation Company from removing the bridges and culverts. Thus, the State must make an offer to the railroad within this time frame.

Representatives of DOT and this Department met with Mr. Richard Taylor, Sales Manager of the railroad on June 2, 1978 to open negotiations for the property. The meeting was cordial. However, Mr. Taylor indicated the railroad expected a premium price for the bridges and they would move ahead with the salvage contract after July 15, 1978 if an offer was not forthcoming.

Location and Description of Property

The Chicago and North Western Transportation Company right-of-way is located between Medary Junction and the West boundary of Fort McCoy in Monroe and La Crosse Counties, Wisconsin. The tract is more fully described in the attached Resolution of Necessity and map.

Ownership and Title

The property is owned by the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company, a corporation based in Chicago, Illinois, and involved in interstate commerce. Acquisition by the State of Wisconsin would involve the land and all bridges, trestles and culverts minus the trackage. A preliminary title report indicates the railroad has good title. However, as with the acquisition of other railroad lines, the possibility of title problems exists.

Value

Two private appraisers have been retained and are presently appraising the property.

Public Need

(See attached Feasibility Study.)

Development Cost

Development costs are estimated to be about \$168,000.

TO: Anthony S. Earl - June 13, 1978

3.

Recommendation

In view of the fact that the injunction protecting the State's interest in the grade expires on July 15 and since it is possible in the event that negotiations are not successful that some bridges could be removed before the July Board meeting, it is recommended that the Natural Resources Board: (1) establish the grade between Medary Junction and the west boundary of Fort McCoy as a state park trail and authorize the Department to negotiate a purchase of the real estate involved and approve the attached Resolution of Necessity authorizing the State to proceed with eminent domain action for the acquisition of the right-of-way if negotiations fail.

DWK:cje

Attach.

cc: J. Scullion - 14
D. J. Mackie - 8
R. Henneger - 13
J. Lissack - Eau Claire
E. J. Faber - 7
D. W. Konkol - 8
J. R. Huntoon - 7

STATE OF WISCONSIN
NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Natural Resources Board is an agency of the government of the State of Wisconsin, created by Section 15.34, Wisconsin Statutes, and is empowered to acquire land for state park purposes by purchase, lease, agreement or condemnation under Section 23.09(2)(d)2., Wisconsin Statutes; and

WHEREAS, the following described real estate is situated in La Crosse and Monroe Counties, in the State of Wisconsin and is more particularly described as:

The Chicago and North Western Transportation Company's abandoned railroad right-of-way extending in a westerly direction from milepost 173.57 which is located on the west line of Section 9, T17N, R3W, Town of Angelo, Monroe County to milepost 176 located in Section 19, T17N, R3W, Monroe County; thence, from milepost 248 located in Section 27, T17N, R4W, Town of Sparta, Monroe County to milepost 260 (including all lands owned by the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company in the Villages of Rockland and Bangor and excluding the overhead trestle street bridge in the Village of Bangor) located in Section 2, T16N, R6W, Town of Hamilton, La Crosse County; thence, from milepost 261.9 located in Section 4, T16N, R6W, Monroe County to milepost 267.8 located in Section 15, T16N, R7W, Town of Medary, La Crosse County, Wisconsin. The total mileage of abandoned railroad grade is 20.43 miles more or less.

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources has conducted a feasibility study of the above described property for inclusion in the State Park Trail System;

WHEREAS, the subject feasibility study completed May 1, 1978, indicated that the grade will provide an excellent connector to the Elroy-Sparta State Park Trail;

WHEREAS, the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company has awarded a contract for the removal of the bridges, trestles, trackage and culverts.

WHEREAS, the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company was enjoined by the La Crosse County Circuit Court from removing the bridges, trestles and culverts until July 15, 1978.

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources desires to purchase the above described property including bridges, trestles and culverts from the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company.

WHEREAS, the Department will submit an offer to the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company prior to July 15, 1978.

AND WHEREAS, the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company may reject the Department's offer and after July 15, 1978, sell and remove the above described property, including bridges, trestles and culverts prior to the Natural Resources Board July meeting on July 26 and 27, 1978.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Natural Resources Board of the State of Wisconsin duly called and convened meeting on the Thursday June 29, 1978, at Kenosha, Wisconsin does hereby find and determine pursuant to Sections 32.06 and 32.07, Wisconsin Statutes, that it is necessary that fee simple or such other title to the above described property including bridges, trestles and culverts sufficient to assure exclusive maintenance, use and operation of a state park trail, be acquired by the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources because of the need to provide state park trail areas for the citizens of the state and the fact that the subject railroad grade is essential for the development of a statewide trail system and the Department intends to develop and use the above described property for such purposes and that the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company may refuse to accept the Department's offer and sell the subject property, and remove the bridges, trestles and culverts prior to this Board's July meeting, thereby, frustrating the Department's acquisition of the grade for inclusion in the state park trail system.

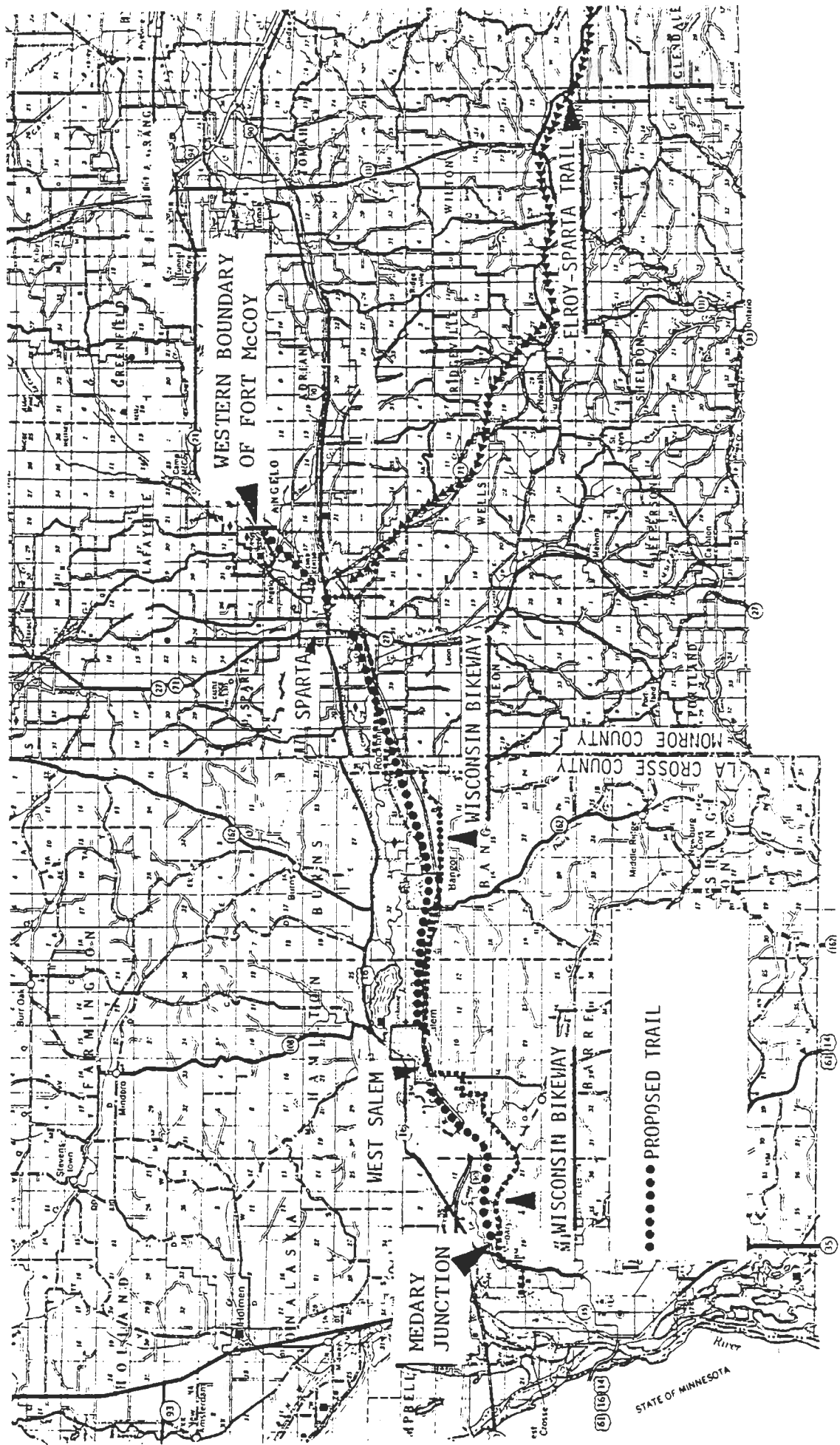
NOW BE IT RESOLVED, that provided after the 15th day of July 1978, the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company rejects the Department's offer and commences to sell the above described property and the bridges, trestles and culverts, that the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources is hereby directed on behalf of this Board to institute and prosecute such condemnation proceedings as are requisite under the laws of Wisconsin against the above described real estate, and against all persons respectively having or claiming an interest in the subject property, so that the State of Wisconsin (Department of Natural Resources) may acquire fee simple or such other title thereto, sufficient to assure exclusive maintenance use and operation as a state park trail.

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

By _____
Clifford F. Messinger, Chairman

Date

John C. Brogan, Secretary



Appendix A

23.091 Recreation areas. (1) DESIGNATION. The department may acquire, develop, operate and maintain state recreation areas. State lands and waters may be designated as state recreation areas that are environmentally adaptable to intensive recreational uses or are so located to provide regional recreational opportunities for urban areas.

(2) MASTER PLAN. The department may designate a recreational area only after a master plan for use and management of the area is prepared, public hearings on the plan are held in the county where the largest portion of land in the project is located, the procedures prescribed in s. 1.11 are complied with, and the plan is approved by the natural resources board.

(3) USE ZONES. The department may establish use zones within state recreation areas providing for the full range of recreational uses, including hunting and fishing. It may adopt rules to control uses within zones and may limit the number of persons using any zone. Such use zones shall be consistent with the activities identified in the master plan formulated under sub. (2).

History: 1977 c. 29.