

Master Plan Variance

Property Name: Wyalusing State Park
Current Master Plan Approved: January 23, 1985
Variance Title: Mississippi Ridge Trail Variance

Proposed Variance to the Master Plan

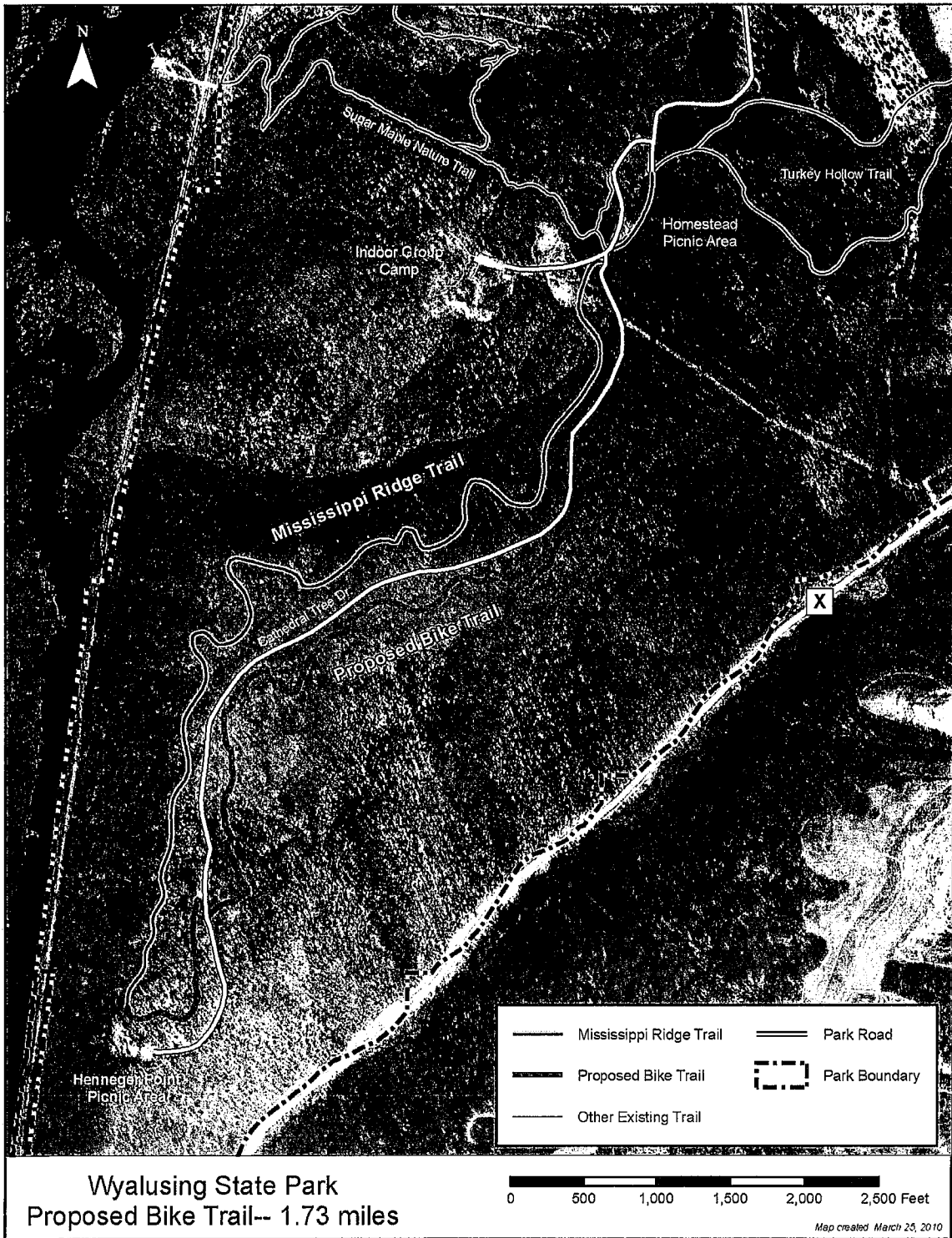
The Mississippi Ridge Trail Variance to the Wyalusing State Park 1985 Master Plan removes the trail designation from Cathedral Tree Drive and develops an off-road trail forming to the topography of the land running nearly parallel to Cathedral Tree Drive. The section of trail removed from Cathedral Tree Drive is approximately 1.5 miles and replaced with a 1.5 mile off-road, safer, higher experiential trail. This trail will be NR 44 classified as lightly developed.

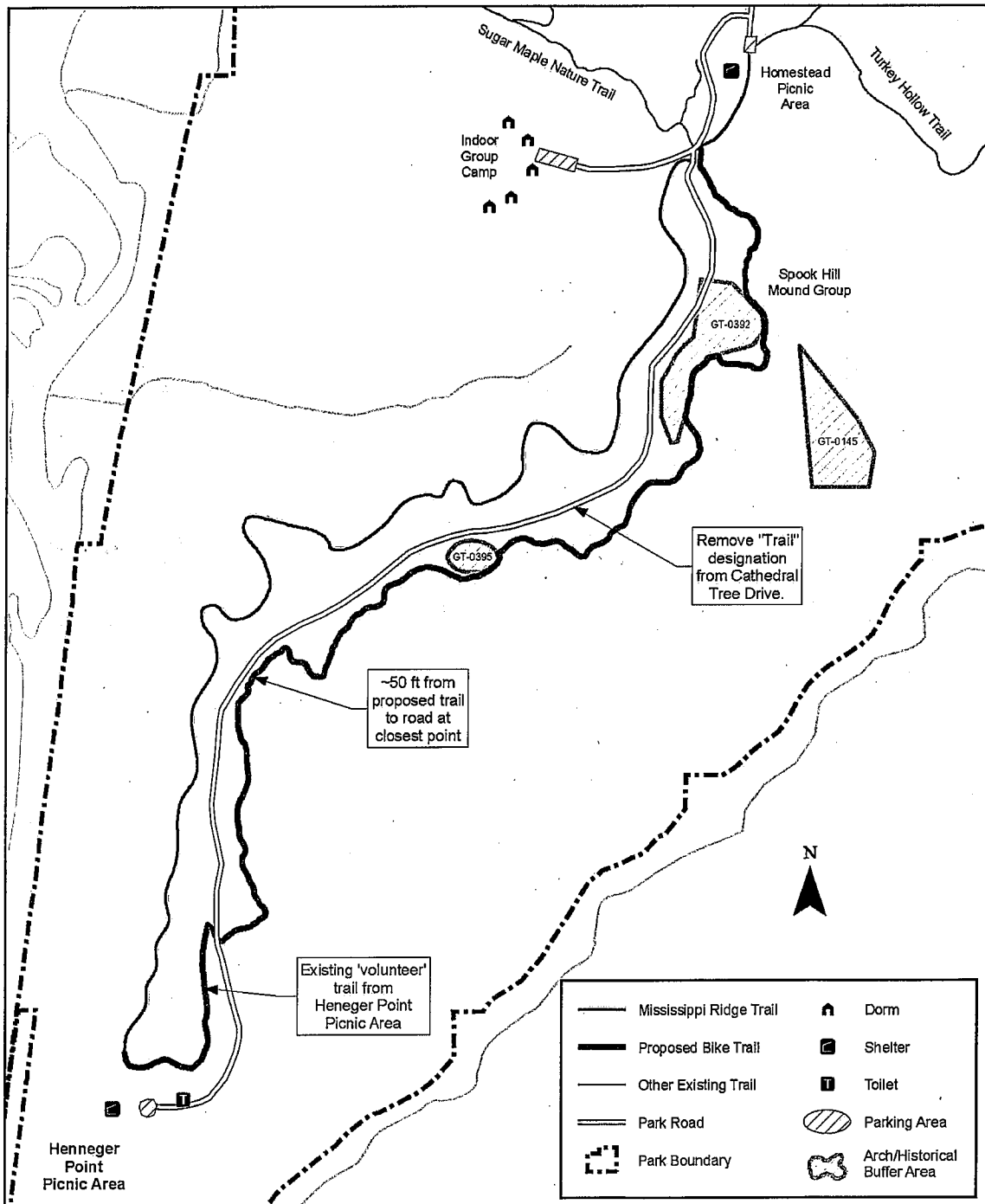
The proposed 1.5 mile off-road trail addition will brake from the existing trail just north of Henneger Point, travel northeast, following the old Cathedral Tree Drive for approximately 1500 feet until crossing over the current Cathedral Tree Drive. At that point the trail will run parallel, to the east, with Cathedral Tree Drive until rejoining the existing off-road section of the Mississippi Ridge Trail east of the Hugh Harper indoor group campground.

The proposed trail addition will be a hiking trail and a designated bike trail with interpretive information at the Spook Hill Mound Group site. This trail will be NR 44 classified as lightly developed. Prior to construction, the property manager should consult with Department Archaeologist to confirm an adequate archaeological buffer around mound groups.

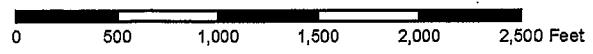
Maps provided on following pages

Approved: Laurie Osterndorf Date: 7/6/10





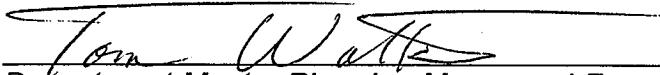
Wyalusing State Park
Proposed Bike Trail-- 1.73 miles




Map created: March 25, 2010

Variance Initiator or Author: Brian Hefty
Title: Superintendent, Wyalusing State Park


Supporting Approvals



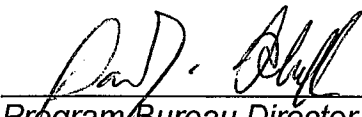
Department Master Planning Manager, LF Date: 6-10-10



Property Manager Date: 6-14-10



Regional Park Director Date: 6/21/10



Program/Bureau Director Date: 6/27/10

Supporting Information

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Variance:

The Mississippi Ridge Trail is a designated bike trail at Wyalusing State Park. Approximately one half, 1.5 miles, of the trail is located off-road. The remaining half is located on-road, Cathedral Tree Drive. The off-road section of the trail is a challenging, yet scenic and enjoyable, section of trail. There are two concerns regarding the on-road section of trail. The first is safety. Cathedral Tree Drive is a winding narrow road and not ideally used both as a main thoroughfare for motorists through the park and as a designated bike trail. The current design creates an unsafe condition for both bike riders and motorists. The second concern is the quality of the on-road biking experience. The purpose of an off-road biking trail is the experience of rugged terrain, scenic beauty of the property, and the comfort of being removed from dangers of on-road traffic.

With this variance the total number off-road miles of trail will increase and provide a new attractive and sustainable trail resulting in operational savings to the property and improved off-road biking experiences for park visitors.

How is the proposed change supported by the property's vision, goals, and objectives:

This proposed trail variance is supported by the following provision in the Wyalusing State Park Master Plan (1985), and complies with the objectives of the Mater Plan.

Goal Statement (page 1):

- To preserve and protect the unique natural, scenic, historical, and archaeological features of Wyalusing State Park, while providing outdoor recreation and nature interpretation opportunities for 190,000 visitors annually.

Annual Objectives (page 1):

- #1 Preserve and maintain special features of the park including the Wyalusing Wilderness Scientific Area (200 acres) and Wyalusing Walnut Forest Scientific Area (140 acres), Indian mounds, evidence of early settlements, scenic river vistas overlooking the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, and other natural features.
- #4 Promote a quality recreational experience for approximately 50,000 campers by providing and maintaining both family and outdoor group camping facilities.

Anticipated Primary benefits of the proposed plan change:

The trail re-route would provide a safer riding experience for the bikers and a safer setting for vehicles and other users of Cathedral Tree Drive.

Additional anticipated benefits:

An additional benefit is that the re-routed trail would provide users a more aesthetically enjoyable biking experience by routing trail users on a more diverse terrain. The new trail would maintain a lower trail grade while still allowing the trail user to visually see beautiful rock outcroppings and dramatic elevational changes.

Additionally, adding more off-road trail miles in the southwestern section of the park might provide potential interpretative sites currently not accessed by trails or roads.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts:

There would be minor impacts to the soil and ground cover as a result of the construction of the approximately 1.5 miles of additional off-road trail. The re-route has been planned to minimize any additional impacts by following the topography and avoiding drainages. Additionally, the 1.5 miles of additional off-road trail would be located near the existing Cathedral Tree Drive road minimizing impacts to isolated vegetated areas.

To avoid adverse impacts the following special considerations will be implemented during trail construction:

- Prior to construction, review of the trail layout by Department resource managers to determine impacts on natural resources
- Prior to construction, review of trail design will be done by regional engineer
- Best Management Practices will be followed during trail construction
- Sustainable trail design will be followed during construction

Summary of any Alternatives Considered:

There were three alternatives for the re-route of the Mississippi Ridge Trail. The following alternatives were developed and evaluated to determine the preferred alternative:

Alternative 1: Status Quo

The existing Mississippi Ridge Trail would remain a multi-use trail running on Cathedral Road for half of the overall distance of the trail.
(This alternative would not improve safety for bikers or motorists. There would be no additional cost for developing 1.5 miles of off-road trail.)

Alternative 2: Create Off-road Trail Loop *(Preferred Alternative)

The existing Mississippi Ridge Trail runs west of Cathedral Tree Road. The trail would continue on that path, then, at Henneger Point Picnic Area turn and run northeast along the remnants of the old Cathedral Tree Drive until rejoining with the current road. At the point, the trail would cross Cathedral Tree Road and run along the eastern side of the road back to the trail head at the Homestead Picnic Area parking lot. This would create approximately a three mile loop trail.
(This alternative would improve safety for bikers and motorists. Also, this would provide a better off-road biking experience for the bikers. Additional costs will be incurred for the new off-road trail construction.)

Alternative 3: Create a Two-way Off-road Trail

The existing off-road section of the Mississippi Ridge Trail would be converted into a two-way trail, eliminating the on-road section of the trail. The existing off-road section of trail would be widened to accommodate two-way biking and hiking traffic. The existing trail head at the Homestead Picnic Area would remain and a new trail head would be added at the Henneger Point Picnic Area. This would create approximately a three mile trail.
(This alternative would improve safety for bikers and motorists. A two-way trail is less desirable for the user, because they would experience the same natural setting twice. Also, widening the trail would not be sustainable, be less natural in appearance, and more difficult to construct if the trail is to fit with the steep topography. Additional costs will be incurred to widen the off-road trail.)

Compatibility with Statutes, Codes, and Department Policies:

This variance to the Wyalusing State Park 1985 Master Plan meets the requirements of *ch. NR44.04, Wis. Adm. Code.*

Federal Aid Limitations:

Wyalusing State Park received Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) dollars in the 1960s.

