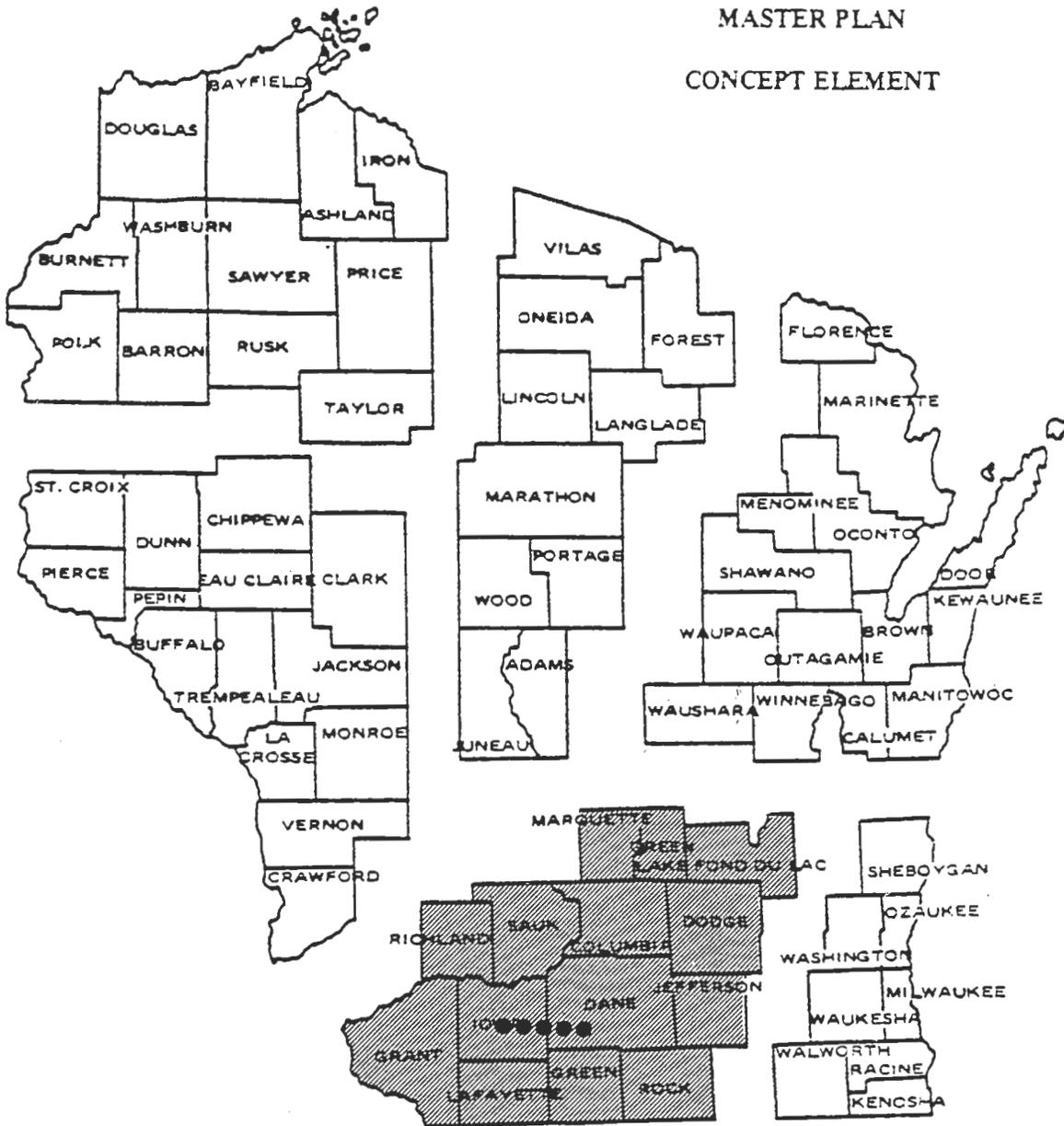


MILITARY RIDGE STATE PARK TRAIL

MASTER PLAN

CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Leader:

- David Aslakson - Park Planner
- Blair Anderson - Fire Control
- Cliff Brynildson - Fish Management
- Tom Hauge - Wildlife Management
- Rich Purin - Park Superintendent
- Jim Widder - Forest Management
- LeRoy Wiesner - Conservation Warden

Approved By: VRB

Date: 8/83

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SECTION I - Actions

A. Goal and Objectives

Goal

Provide a 39.6 mile long state park trail for year round use that will provide two-way traffic for bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling, and non-motorized winter use opportunities, and preserve the corridor for present and future generations.

Annual Objectives

- bikes
snowmobiles
cross skiers
hikers
Berry picking
1. Provide a trail with the necessary improvements that will accommodate 100,000 bicyclists.
 2. Provide winter use opportunities for 25,000 snowmobilers.
 3. Provide non-motorized winter use opportunities including cross country skiing for 5,000 users.
 4. Provide trail opportunities for 15,000 hikers.
 5. Provide for 5,000-10,000 user-days for such activities as berry picking, bird watching, photography, general nature lore, and fishing in streams that are crossed by the trail.
 6. Accommodate individuals who are handicapped or disadvantaged through the proper design, construction, and management of the property and its facilities.

Additional Benefits

1. Provide connecting links for other recreational systems in the region.
2. Benefit wildlife and plant species indigenous to the region.

B. Recommended Development and Management Program

It is recommended that the right-of-way be classified as a state park trail to be complemented with the necessary support facilities to make the property safe and functional for year around use.

1. Development (Fig. 2)

Phase I

Development of the 39.6 mile long trail with a 100-foot right-of-way will be phased in accordance with available funding. The first phase of development totaling about \$660,000, will focus on preparing the trail for limited public use. Planking, curbing, and railings will be placed on 45 existing railroad trestles. The trail will be marked with stop signs alerting users of public road

crossings. Caution signs will be erected on public roadways to alert motorists of the trails crossing. Old ties and debris left from railroad abandonment and diseased or dead trees will be removed. Boundary fence will be constructed along both sides of the right-of-way according to acquisition agreements and statutory requirements. The trail will be surfaced with limestone screenings and marked with informational, directional, and control signing. Initially, the trail tread will be eight feet wide to accommodate modest two-way bicycle traffic.

Phase II

The second phase of development, estimated at \$270,000 will include additional limestone screening surfacing on the more heavily used east end (from Mt. Horeb east) to increase the tread width to 12 feet, and parking spaces for an additional 210 cars at six locations. In addition, trail access will be provided to Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks, the City of Madison and several county parks that are located near the right-of-way.

Drinking water, picnic tables, trash cans, and informational kiosks would be provided at parking areas. Toilet facilities would be provided at all areas except the parking facility at the Village of Blue Mounds. Toilet facilities for that area would be provided at Blue Mound State Park, located less than a mile away.

Trail entrance visitors' stations will be located in Verona and Dodgeville and will provide picnicking, a small office space, storage, and a sales and concessions area for bicycle rental. Cooperation with the private sector will be sought to provide concession facilities and services.

Campgrounds for trail users will be provided at Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks and will be connected to the grade via a bicycle path.

All developed areas will be landscaped to enhance the property by providing shade and aesthetic interest for the user. Completion of all development will be dependent upon available funds and statewide priorities. Additional and/or up-to-date justification will also be required.

2. Management

a. Facility management

The trail will be developed and maintained to provide opportunities for hiking, biking, snowmobiling and non-motorized winter uses. Snowmobiling will be restricted to the west edge of Mt. Horeb to Dodgeville section (about 24 miles) while the non-motorized winter-use opportunities including cross country skiing will be permitted on the Verona - Mt. Horeb section, a distance of over 16 miles.

Currently, the trail is managed by the Governor Dodge Work Unit. However, a work force specific to the trail will be required to manage the property. Personnel will be headed by a Park Superintendent I, and will include a seasonal patrol officer and a seasonal ranger, plus 5 limited term employes. The park trail staff will be responsible to the Governor Dodge Work Unit. Equipment will include a shop-storage facility, two pick-up trucks, a tractor with brush hogs, a trail groomer, moped, ATV, bicycles, chainsaws, radios, and miscellaneous items.

It would be desirable for a nonprofit organization, composed of interested citizens from communities along the trail, to be formed to provide services for bicycle rental and pickup, refreshments, souvenir sales, lodging, and other services and amenities to trail users. Such groups could be organized in Dodgeville and/or Verona. This type of arrangement exists at state trails in other parts of Wisconsin.

b. Vegetative Management

Vegetative management is needed to promote tree growth for shade, aesthetics, and enhancement of wildlife. In addition, remnant prairies are to be maintained and new prairies established for similar purposes.

Improvement of the trail's grassland and prairie areas will maintain wildlife habitat. Controlled burning may be prescribed on the trail to maintain and improve the prairie cover.

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 are to be selectively cut to assure the trail users vistas of the surrounding landscape.

Where developments within sight of the trail reduce aesthetic value, native vegetation will be planted 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 and/or private individuals.

c. Wildlife Management

Weed trees, such as boxelder, will be periodically removed to release and stimulate shrub growth to maintain wildlife habitat. In addition, brush will be selectively managed to improve food and cover for songbirds. Some wood duck nesting boxes could be situated in suitable habitat along the trail. Since hunting will not be allowed along the trail, sufficient signs will be posted to inform the public. Implementation of the preceding items will be coordinated between Wildlife Management and the Park's staff.

remnant + new prairies

vistas of surrounding landscape

biological inventory needed

d. Fish Management

Long range objectives of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association include reducing soil loss and nutrient release. Better land use practices and improved feedlot management would help obtain these goals.

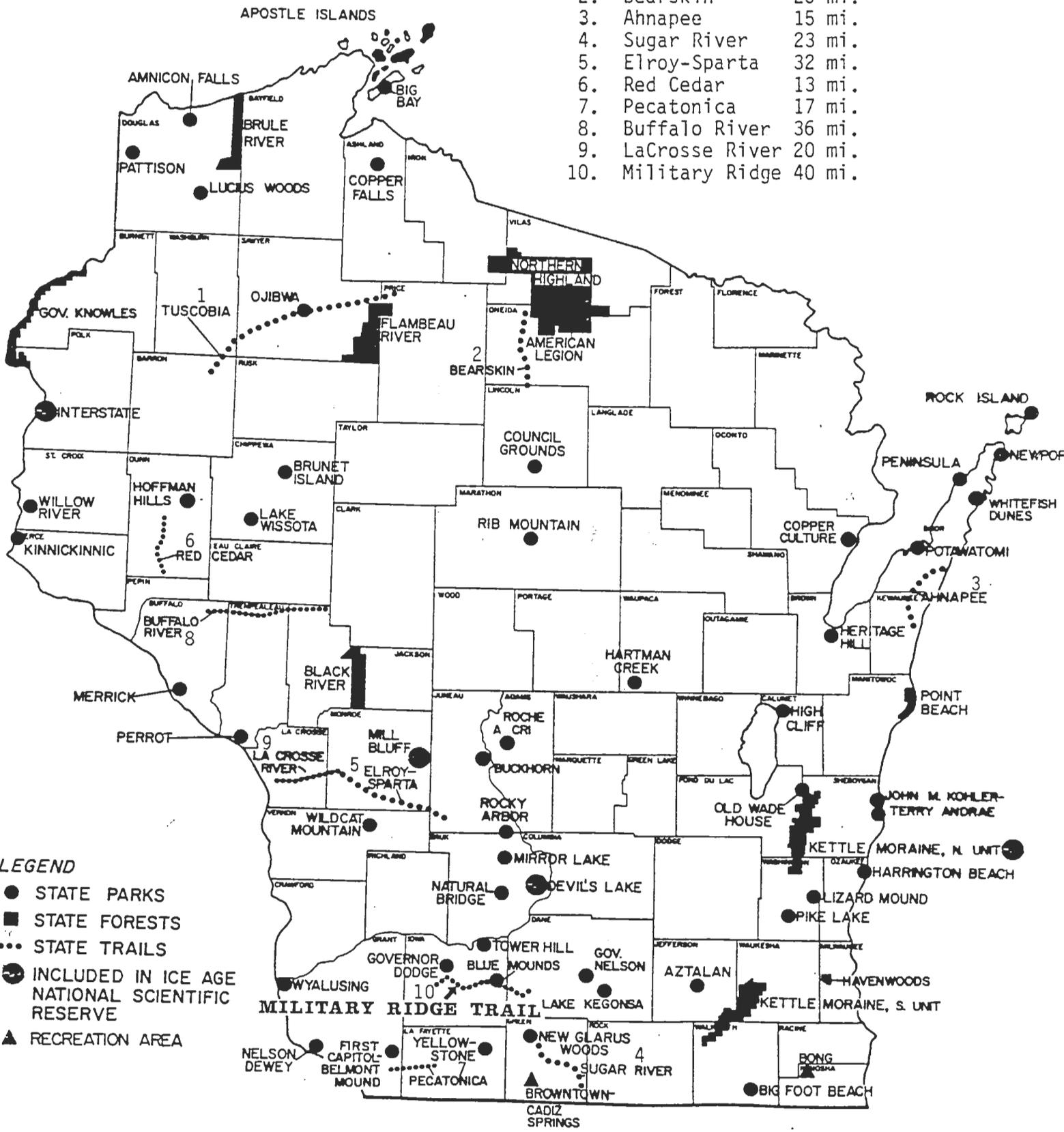
The large spring found at the junction of the trail and Highway 18-151 west of Verona should be protected. Grazing and watering of cattle in the immediate vicinity of the spring should be discouraged.

Fishing access will be provided at trail crossings over the streams and will be designed not to conflict with other trail activities.

3. Land Acquisition

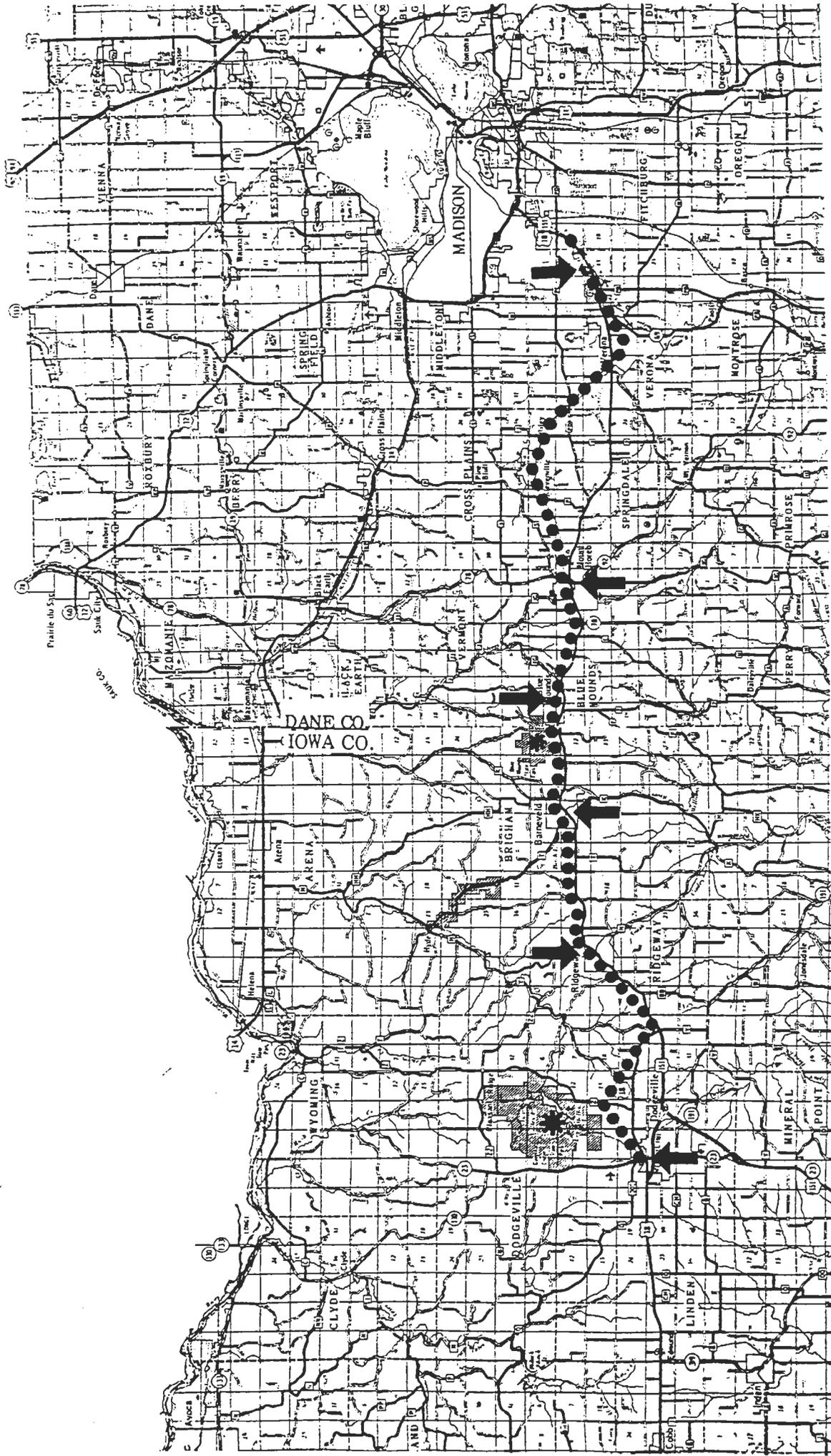
As of August 1, 1983, state ownership for the Military Ridge Trail was 472.6 acres. About five acres are needed to provide a trail terminus at Dodgeville and approximately four acres are to be leased from Dane County for the east terminous of the trail at Verona. The recommended acreage goal is 490 acres.

1. Tuscobia 72 mi.
2. Bearskin 25 mi.
3. Ahnapée 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.
10. Military Ridge 40 mi.



- LEGEND**
- STATE PARKS
 - STATE FORESTS
 - ⋯ STATE TRAILS
 - INCLUDED IN ICE AGE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC RESERVE
 - ▲ RECREATION AREA

State Locator Map Figure 1



- TRAIL
- ↑ REST AREA - PARKING
- * REST AREA - CAMPING

MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

SECTION II - Support Data

A. Background Information

1. Location (Figures 1 and 2)

The trail is located on an east-west axis in south central Wisconsin within Dane and Iowa Counties between Madison and Dodgeville. Other communities abutting the trail are Fitchburg, Verona, Mount Horeb, Blue Mounds, Barneveld, and Ridgeway.

a. Relationship to Highways

The major travel route to the site is U.S. Highway 18-151 which generally parallels the trail the entire route. Interstate Highway 90-94 passes within 12 miles of the east end of the trail. Important highways intersecting the grade on the north-south axis are State Highways 69, 78, and 92.

b. Relationship to Population Centers

There are at least 8 population centers of 100,000 people or more within 145 miles of the trail, the largest being the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison metropolitan areas. There are at least 12 million people living within 150 miles of the trail. The City of Madison, with a metropolitan area of nearly 350,000 people envelopes the east end of the trail.

2. History of the Area

*Agricultural
significance*

The rail line was constructed in the 1870's along the base of the Old Military Road, a corridor built to open the southwestern portion of the state to settlement in the mid 1830's. The rail line was constructed to serve the area's agricultural industry, the lumber business further north and to link the communities together with passenger service.

3. Chronology of the Property's Establishment and Development

- May 14, 1971 - The Chicago-Northwestern Transportation Company petitioned abandonment with the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC)
- October 10, 1974 - The company again petitioned abandonment.
- March 8, 1976 - The Department of Natural Resources completed a state trail feasibility study from Klevenville westward to Dodgeville.
- December 1, 1979 - The ICC approved the abandonment petition.
- May 27, 1981 - The Natural Resources Board established the 23.5 mile long Military Ridge State Park Trail between Mount Horeb and Dodgeville.

June 18, 1982 - The Chicago-Northwestern Railroad Company was given permission to abandon the stretch between Mount Horeb and Madison.

January 26, 1983 - Natural Resources Board established the 16.1 mile long addition to the Military Ridge Trail making the total length 39.6 miles.

April 30, 1983 - The Department took possession of the 16.1 mile addition between Mount Horeb and Madison.

4. Upon assumption of ownership, the Department closed the grade to public use. It will remain closed until the first phase development, which will include planking and railing of trestles, surfacing, signing, and some use area development. This work is expected to be finished by the end of 1985. The Governor Dodge Work Unit leader, stationed at Governor Dodge State Park, is responsible for management of the trail.

B. Resource Capabilities and Inventory

1. Geology

The trail is sharply divided into two sections: the area west of Mount Horeb is unglaciated and is dominated by well defined ridges, rock formations, and deep, well drained valleys. The area east of Mount Horeb to Madison was glaciated and is characterized by marshes, glacial till, moraines, and lakes.

On the west, the trail lies in a transitional state between Precambrian granite and Cambrian dolomite with some sandstone and shale. Geologic erosion has removed dolomite in some areas. On the east end of the trail between Mount Horeb and Madison, the site is generally underlain by water bearing Cambrian sandstone and by Dolomite.

2. Soils

The trail right-of-way is segmented into two general soil groups, upland and river valley. From west of Blue Mound to the west end at Dodgeville are upland prairie soils, dominated by Dubuque and Dodgeville silt loams. These soils are generally deep, fertile and well drained and can be highly erodable, depending on the steepness of slope. The soils around the base of Blue Mound State Park are stony to very stony, unevenly drained Dubuque silt loams. East of Blue Mound the soils gradually shade to valley type series, culminating in a long stretch of river bottom soils dominated by the Otter and Orion Series from east of Mount Horeb almost to Verona. The soils are fertile, deep, level, and poorly drained and can be subject to flooding. Most of the other soil types found on the eastern half of the right-of-way are typical of lower valley slopes such as the Edmund and Gale Series. The rail line itself was located on a grade composed of rock and cinder ballast.

2 sections
W-Mt. Horeb
unglaciated
E-Mt. Horeb
glaciated

3. Water Resources

Similar to the trail's soil types, the right-of-way's water resources are split into two sections. From approximately west of Mount Horeb the grade slopes upward until it runs along the top of the Military Ridge from about Barneveld to the west end at Dodgeville. In this area there are no water features except occasional run-off stream courses. East of Mount Horeb, however, the trail right-of-way generally follows the Sugar River Valley, particularly from west of Klevenville to about Verona.

The Sugar River is fed by two main tributaries: Schalpback Creek which crosses the trail west of Klevenville, and a second smaller tributary that originates between Pine Bluff and Mount Horeb and joins Schalpback Creek west of Riley forming the Sugar River. The river and its tributaries cross the trail between Klevenville and Verona six times.

West of Verona and immediately south of Highway 18-151, a very active spring originates and passes under the grade. On Dane County land east of Verona there is a group of active springs that flow under the grade and feed Badger Mill Creek. A 17 acre kettle lake (Goose Lake) is located immediately south of the trail in the Town of Verona, adjacent to the City of Fitchburg.

Schalpback Creek was managed for brook and brown trout in the mid 1950's. The Upper Sugar River is managed for forage fish but a modest population of northern pike and bullheads are present. Fishing pressure is light and primarily involves fishing for white suckers in the spring of the year. The Upper Sugar River also supports a bountiful population of mayfly which live in the silt beds. There are no endangered or threatened aquatic species known to be present on the right-of-way.

Much of the Upper Sugar River watershed has been subject to soil loss due to erosion and nutrient release from feedlots and field fertilization.

4. Vegetative Cover

The original cover along most of the grade was probably an oak savannah prairie. Present forest cover is a transitional central hardwood complex. Due to clearing projects and fires within the railroad right-of-way, the timber types are even aged. Unless otherwise manipulated, much of the right-of-way will be invaded by trees and shrubs. There are scattered prairie remnants along the trail. Higher quality remnants will be preserved to provide research, educational, and public enjoyment opportunities. Though a complete biological inventory of the trail does not exist, major tree and shrub species within the right-of-way are boxelder, elm, black cherry, white, red, black and bur oak, black walnut, sumac, plum, thornapple, willow, dogwood, and honeysuckle.

major species
transitional

also see map
p. 127

Two Wisconsin threatened plant species, prairie parsnip and small white ladyslipper orchid, are known to be present on the right-of-way.

5. Wildlife

The relationship of wildlife to the Military Ridge Trail varies according to the intensity of land use and the physical characteristics found along its 40 mile length. In the more heavily farmed areas, the trail's value to wildlife increases as it provides the best permanent year around grass and bush cover. Areas such as Blue Mound State Park diminish wildlife significance of the trail because of their extensive forest habitat.

The primary game species inhabiting the trail include cottontail rabbits, pheasants, bobwhite quail, and squirrels. Of these, rabbits were the most commonly hunted. The amount of hunting occurring along the trail in the past has been estimated at less than 500 user days annually. White-tailed deer occasionally use the corridor but are more likely to be seen along the edge of woodlots visible from the trail. Red fox, raccoon, opossum and skunk are common furbearers.

Since abandonment of the railroad, other mammals such as woodchuck and badger may now be present. Small mammals such as shrews, moles, voles, and mice plus frogs, snakes, turtles, and toads also inhabit the right-of-way.

A variety of song bird species are likely to be observed along the trail. Among the most common are horned larks, meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds, Savannah, song and field sparrows, yellow throats, catbirds, brown thrashers, white-breasted nuthatch, chickadees, cardinals, robins, and bluebirds. Over 100 species of birds have been observed at Blue Mound State Park.

No endangered or threatened bird or animal species are known to frequent the Military Ridge corridor. However, Cooper's hawks have recently been observed at Blue Mound State Park.

6. Site Inventory

Land classifications within the corridor include upland and lowland brush, grass, remnant prairie, swamp and water. There are no commercial timber types of significance within the trail corridor. However, both Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks possess a variety of timber types. One category not mentioned in the master planning handbook is urban development which covers approximately 41 acres of the trail right-of-way.

urban development

Blue Mound State Park

A breakdown of land use cover types includes:

- Scattered brush and trees - 228 acres
- Remnant prairie and grass - 115 acres
- Predominantly tree covered - 73 acres
- Communities and other development - 41 acres
- Railroad grade - 36 acres
- Wetlands and open water - 27 acres

7. Land Use Inventory

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

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

8. Historical or Archaeological Features

There are no known historical and/or archaeological features located within the corridor of the Military Ridge Trail. The State Historical Society has been contacted, and they have not identified any sites within the state ownership.

C. Management Problems

1. Vegetation is encroaching on the trail right-of-way. An active program of clearing unwanted vegetation will be needed periodically to eliminate a potential green tunnel channeling effect.
2. The at grade crossing of Highway 18-151 west of Verona creates a safety hazard because of the existing high traffic count and the expected high trail use. Solutions would be rerouting Highway 18-151 or the separation of the two uses via an overpass or underpass. Though it is possible that 18-151 could be rerouted as part of the continued upgrading of that highway, it is not likely to happen for a number of years. An underpass appears unlikely because of the high water tables. An additional possibility would be the rerouting of the trail east or west of the present site.
3. The trail surface may be damaged by wetness or animal borrows. The limestone surface can rut when wet and burrowing animals dig occasional large and dangerous holes on the trail tread. The limestone surface should be groomed more often when wet and additional screenings added for fill where necessary. The trail should be monitored for hazards such as deep animal borrows.
4. Street curbs in the Village of Barneveld. During a street improvement project, curbs were placed across the trail right-of-way. These will have to be removed where the trail crosses the street.

no historic or archaeological features

5. Erosion has been occurring along steep banks and around bridges, culverts, and ditches.
6. Vandalism to bridges, vegetation, signs, the trail bed, and adjacent properties creates a continuing maintenance problem.
7. Though the trail is closed until further notice, some activities such as hiking, hunting, motorcycling, four-wheel drive use, and snowmobiling have been occurring. Some of this use has trespassed onto private lands.
8. Some timber theft of the more valuable trees such as oaks and black walnut has been occurring.

D. Recreation Needs and Justifications

The Military Ridge State Park Trail is located in Regions 8 and 9 of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 1981. The Regions' residents vary from primarily rural in Region 8 (Iowa County) to mostly urban in Region 9 (Dane County). The location of the trail makes it readily accessible to the highly populated areas of Regions 9 and 10 (the Milwaukee Area) as well as population centers of northern Illinois and northeastern Iowa.

The 1981 SCORP supply, demand and need data relative to each type of potential trail use follows:

1. Bicycling

While there were 480 miles of off-highway bicycling in the state in 1981, Regions 9 and 10 contain some of the highest numbers of bicyclists in the state. Bicycling is a growing recreational activity and the need for trails is expected to grow from an existing 60 miles in Region 9 to an additional 635 miles by 1984. There are no bicycle trails in Region 8 at present, but the 1984 need is estimated at 185 miles.

2. Hiking

SCORP states that there is a need for an additional 117 miles of hiking trail in Region 8 and 541 miles in Region 9 by 1984 over existing trails.

3. Snowmobiling

With only 92 miles of snowmobile trails, Region 8 accounts for only one percent of the state's supply of almost 9,000 miles. Region 9 contains only three percent of the state's total.

Snowmobiling needs are leveling off in many areas of the state. However, Region 8 projects a need for an additional 29 miles of trail and Region 9 as additional 579 miles of trail by 1984 over existing trails.

4. Cross-Country Skiing

Region 8 provides about one-half of one percent of the state's cross-country ski trails. This figure is by far the smallest of the planning regions. Region 9 provides only about 7% of the state's total. The anticipated growth of cross-country skiing will result in an increased need for ski trails. By 1984, there will be an estimated need for an additional 360 miles of ski trail in Region 8 and 1,664 miles in Region 9.

5. Horseback Riding

SCORP shows that both Regions 8 and 9 contain less than the average miles of trails for horseback riding. While the projected need for additional trails is expected to remain stable in Region 8, there is a projected need for an additional 101 miles in Region 9 by 1984.

6. Primitive Camping

SCORP states that the combined primitive campsites (14 sites total) existing in Regions 8 and 9 are only one-quarter the state's average. The 1984 projection expresses an additional need of 75 sites in Regions 8 and 410 sites in Region 9.

7. Picnicking

While the Military Ridge Trail offers potential for picnicking, the 1981 SCORP does not provide supply, demand and need data for this type.

E. Analysis of Alternatives

1. Management

a. Designate as a State Park Trail. As a state park, the entire 40-mile trail could be managed to allow 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 Recreational 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 an particular zone.

2. Development and Acquisition

a. Leave the trail in an undeveloped condition. This alternative would provide for only enough acquisition to tie the entire length of the trail together, but would have no development.

The Department would merely retain the right-of-way for future development and use. Such an approach could lead to safety, vandalism, trespass and encroachment problems, as well as degeneration of the resource.

- b. The Department could provide a 40-mile corridor for limited recreational use. Such activities as hiking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing in winter could be enjoyed by only planking and railing the bridges, signing and by providing limited parking facilities. Other limited development could include toilets wells, and informational kiosks.

- c. Full Trail Development

- (1) Trail Facilities

This alternative would provide for a full complement of trail facilities for use by bikers, hikers, snowmobilers, and non-motorized winter trail users including cross country skiers. The trail would be surfaced, the bridges planked and railed, rest stops would be provided at major access points as well as communities along the trail. Parking, toilets, water, picnic tables, bike racks, etc. would be provided at all major rest stops. In addition, concessions buildings with bike rentals, refreshments, etc. would be constructed at the west and east ends of the trail. The use of local community facilities would be incorporated wherever possible.

- (2) Campground Development

Additional campgrounds for trail users only, accessible only from the trail will be located at Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks, with potential for a third site on Dane County Park land on the trail's east end. These facilities would include a connecting trail to the campground, toilets, water, fire rings, landscaping, and a shower building.

- (3) Connector Trail Development

The Military Ridge Trail will be connected to the City of Madison via a system using city streets and a bike path paralleling Highway 18-151. Other trail connectors to associated communities and areas of interest will be evaluated and acted upon on an individual basis. The Department may assist in these projects by providing financial and/or technical advice or other information as requested.

(4) Other Development and Use

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 gauging 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, ATV's, etc. are incompatible with bicycling and hiking during the snowfree seasons for safety reasons. Furthermore, constant use of some of the off-road recreational vehicles could cause plant damage, erosion and damage to the trail tread. Since the trail crosses waterways, severe problems of bank erosion and siltation of surface waters could result. In addition, the use of ATV's would increase the 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 a public need is established or serious vegetation damage occurs. Classification as a recreational area trail would permit both large and small game hunting and trapping activities. Because of possible use and safety conflicts hunters and other users 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 non-consumptive 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. The estimated 100,000+ users and the trail's proximity to the City of Madison would probably generate a goodly amount of year around non-consumptive use, and the use of the trail for hunting may not be appropriate for the property.

Appendix . Wild bird species likely to be seen along Military Ridge Trail.^A

Bobwhite Quail
Mourning Dove
Red-headed Woodpecker
Common Flicker
Eastern Kingbird
Bluejay
Starling
Bobolink
Brownheaded Cowbird
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Northern Oriole
Grackle
American Goldfinch
Savannah Sparrow
Tree Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Junco
Song Sparrow
Cardinal
Indigo Bunting
Barn Swallow
Yellow Warbler
Yellow Throat
House Sparrow
Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Black-capped Chickadee
Robin
Ruffed Grouse
Ring-necked Pheasant
Hungarian Partridge
Pileated Woodpecker

^ASpecies listed are based on 13 censuses conducted along similar habitat in Richland County. Only those species encountered 50 or more times were listed.

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: July 25, 1983

File Ref: 1430

To: Dave Weizenicker - P&R/4

From: Dick Lindberg - FOR/4 *fi*

Subject: Wild Resources Property Master Plan Review

The Council recognized this property as having little, or no, value for the wild resources program but of considerable value for recreational trail purposes. It suggested that the Bureau of Parks and Recreation give consideration to a long-range proposal to link this trail with the C&NW RR abandonment west from Waukesha, Wales and Jefferson. The result would be an excellent across-state recreational trail that would be certain to generate high use.

DL:jn

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: August 4, 1983

File Ref: 2500

To: D. Lindberg - FOR/4

From: D. Weizenicker

D. Weizenicker

Subject: WRAC Comments on Military Ridge State Trail Master Plan

Thank you for the Council's comments on the Military Ridge Trail Master Plan.

We recognize the potential tie-in for bikers with the Cottage Grove-Waukesha railroad right-of-way. However, we do not want to refer to the Cottage Grove-Waukesha grade in the master plan until we have gone through the usual procedure of notifying legislative representatives, completing a title review, securing appraisals, meeting with local officials, and holding public meetings to determine acceptance of the project.

The Council's prompt response to our shortened review deadline is appreciated.

DJK:sb

cc: → D. Kulhanek - P&R/4
J. Treichel - P&R/4
D. Morrisette - Nevin



The State of Wisconsin

SCIENTIFIC AREAS PRESERVATION COUNCIL

Box 7921
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

August 2, 1983

IN REPLY REFER TO: 2100

Mr. David Weizenicker, Director
Bureau of Parks & Recreation
Dept. of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Dave:

We have reviewed the Military Ridge State Trail Master Plan and offer these comments.

Natural area inventories have located a number of native prairie or sedge meadow remnants on or adjacent to this abandoned railroad right of way. The most important is a prairie remnant on the right of way in T6N R8E, Sections 20,21 (Highway 18 & 151 crossing to about 1 mile east of the crossing), and an adjacent fen and sedge meadow in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20. The right of way and adjacent wetland of some 100 acres is a natural area of state significance and a potential scientific area which supports two Wisconsin threatened plant species; prairie parsnip and small white ladyslipper orchid. We recommend acquisition of this wetland by the Department to complement the trail project. The tract also has important wildlife and fishery value.

Mr. Rich Henderson has studied prairies on this right of way and has provided locations for a number of small remnants. The plan could recognize these remnants by establishing protective land use classifications for the best remnants, either as public use natural area or habitat preservation zones. Classifying the trail tread as intensive recreation and the margins as extensive recreation seems unworkable and offers no special protection for the prairies.

We appreciate the references in the plan to management and restoration of prairie on the right of way, but suggest that more effort to complete biological inventories before development is planned is logical. See page 8 - "no endangered or threatened species of wild plants are known to be present on the property", and on page 3, "Since a complete biological inventory of the trail does not exist, it is recommended that an inventory be conducted as funds permit...". We suggest that a small portion of the funds available for development be made available immediately to complete the biological inventory.

Several individuals have recommended that portions of the 5 miles of right of way between Riley and Verona contain prairie remnants which provide an appropriate site for a Leopold memorial to recognize his efforts in establishing the pioneer Riley Farmer-Sportsman Hunting Cooperative.

Mr. David Weizenicker, August 2, 1983

2.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and would like to follow up on the potential scientific area designation following acquisition of the fen and sedge meadow should this occur.

Cordially,


Forest Stearns
Chairman

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: August 9, 1983

File Ref: 2510

To: Cliff Germain - ER/4

From: J. Treichel



Subject: SAPC Comments on Military Ridge State Trail Master Plan

Our Bureau's response to the Scientific Areas Preservation Council comments and recommendations on the Military Ridge Trail Master Plan are as follows:

1. Natural area inventories have located a number of native prairie or sedge meadow remnants on or adjacent to this abandoned railroad right-of-way. The most important is a prairie remnant on the right-of-way in T6N R8E, Sections 20, 21 (Highway 18 & 151 crossing to about 1 mile east of the crossing), and an adjacent fen and sedge meadow in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 20. The right-of-way and adjacent wetland of some 100 acres is a natural area of state significance and a potential scientific area which supports two Wisconsin threatened plant species; prairie parsnip and small white ladyslipper orchid. We recommend acquisition of this wetland by the Department to complement the trail project. The tract also has important wildlife and fishery value.

Department Response:

The master plan on pages 2, 3, and 8 mentions the existence of prairie remnants along the right-of-way. More specific information concerning location and management will appear in the implementation element.

The Department may want to acquire the 100 acres of adjacent wetlands but we recommend land acquisition funds other than Parks' be used since the parcel is not essential for trail purposes.

2. Mr. Rich Henderson has studied prairies on this right-of-way and has provided locations for a number of small remnants. The plan could recognize these remnants by establishing protective land use classifications for the best remnants, either as public use natural area or habitat preservation zones. Classifying the trail tread as intensive recreation and the margins as extensive recreation seems unworkable and offers no special protection for the prairies.

Department Response:

We prefer to use the extensive recreation area land use classification for all trail right-of-ways because of the flexibility this classification gives in managing the resource. The prairie remnants are addressed in the master plan and they will be properly protected and maintained to provide research, educational, and public enjoyment opportunities.

3. We appreciate the references in the plan to management and restoration of prairie on the right-of-way, but suggest that more effort to complete biological inventories before development is planned is logical. See page 8 - "no endangered or threatened species of wild plants are known to be present on the property," and on page 3, "Since a complete biological inventory of the trail does not exist, it is recommended that an inventory be conducted as funds permit...". We suggest that a small portion of the funds available for development be made available immediately to complete the biological inventory.

Department Response:

We have noted the Council's suggestion. Rather than commit funds in the master plan for a biological inventory we will continue with our "as funds permit" approach. The plan was revised to mention the two threatened plant species.

4. Several individuals have recommended that portions of the 5 miles of right-of-way between Riley and Verona contain prairie remnants which provide an appropriate site for a Leopold memorial to recognize his efforts in establishing the pioneer Riley Farmer-Sportsman Hunting Cooperative.

Department Response:

So noted.

We thank the Council for commenting on the Military Ridge Trail Master Plan.

DJK:sb

cc: D. Kulhanek - P&R/4
J. Treichel - P&R/4
D. Morrissette - Nevin

APPROVED
10/1/80

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING WORKSHEET AUG 25 1980
(Attach additional sheets if necessary)

Title of Proposal: Acquisition and development of the abandoned Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company railroad grade between Mt. Horeb and Dodgeville for State trail purposes.

Location: County Dane and Iowa *See attachment A and Map #1 and #2 for further Township _____ North, Range _____ East, West descriptive information plus Section(s) _____ plat maps. Political Town _____

Project:

1) General Description (overview)

The project proposes the acquisition of a segment of the abandoned Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company railroad line between the communities of Mt. Horeb and Dodgeville. The right-of-way will provide a scenic public trail which would accommodate year-round use with two-way traffic for biking, hiking and snowmobiling during the winter months. Of the 24.6 miles of right-of-way, the Department of Transportation intends to use about 4.5 miles for their U.S. Highway 18-151 improvement project. However, of this 4.5 miles, 3.1 miles of (continued on attached sheet)

2) Purpose and Need (include history and background as appropriate)

The grade is proposed for acquisition to provide a scenic off-road trail facility which offers the potential of access to Stewart and Brigham County Parks (Dane), Birch Lake Village Park and Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks for bicyclists. The grade adjoins the south boundary of Blue Mound State Park. Acquisition and future development would meet local and statewide needs for off-road hiking, biking and snowmobiling trail facilities as indicated by the following current and projected recreational need figures. (continued on attached sheet)

Authorities and Approvals:

- 1) Statutory Authority to Initiate Section 27.01, Wisconsin Statutes.
- 2) Permits or Approvals Required First right to acquire by DOT, Section 195.199 of Wisconsin Statutes.
- 3) Participants notified of above requirements? Yes No
- 4) Does this proposal comply with floodplain and local zoning requirements? (Parcels acquired for the terminus will be developed in compliance with local zoning ordinances.) Yes No

Estimated Cost and Funding Source:

Estimated cost will not be known until an appraisal has been received.

Time Schedule:

Purchase of the grade is proposed for late 1980 if negotiations are successful.

EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

1) Physical (Topography-soils-water-air-wetland types)

Physical

The grade follows the Military Ridge, a well known topographic feature which constitute the divide between the north flowing tributaries of the Wisconsin River and the south flowing streams tributary to the Rock and Mississippi Rivers. Lands adjoining the grade are primarily agricultural, although woodlands are encountered on the south slope of Blue Mound.

Topography

As with most railroad lines, the grade is quite level with the greatest elevation change occurring at Blue Mound. The asset of many curves allows for changing views of the wooded slopes and valleys to the north and rolling farm lands to the south.

(continued on attached sheet)

2) Biological

a) Flora

Most of the area is in the Central Hardwood Forest region of the United States, however some is in the prairie area that extends northward from Illinois. Originally, much of the area was covered by forests. The prairies were mainly along the Wisconsin River and along Military Ridge. Within the grade's right-of-way, especially in the vicinity of Blue Mound, many tree species common in southern Wisconsin are found including shrub species such as gray dogwood, wild plum, hazelnut, elderberry, sumac, wild grape and raspberry sp. Remnant prairies containing such plants as goldenrod, sunflower, asters,

(continued on attached sheet)

b) Fauna

Some sections of the right-of-way contain enough vegetative cover to provide habitat for whitetail deer, squirrel, rabbit, woodchuck, skunk, ruffed grouse, various small mammals and a variety of song birds.

3) Social

Mt. Horeb (pop. 3,112), Barneveld (pop. 590), Ridgeway (pop. 503) and Dodgeville (pop. 3,384) are small rural trade centers. Several well known tourist attractions and a private campground are located near the grade. Dane County's Stewart and Brigham Parks, Birch Lake Village Park (north of Barneveld), Blue Mound State Park and Governor Dodge State Park are in proximity to the grade.

4) Economic

The railroad grade has been used by the Chicago and Northwestern RR to service the trade, factories and agricultural needs of the adjacent communities.

Railroad companies do not pay real estate taxes, however, revenue taxes paid by the railroad company were distributed back to the townships under the Department of Revenue's Tax Aid System.

5) Other (include archaeological, historical, etc.)

The grade follows the route of the old Military Road constructed in 1835-36. This route was strategic to the Army, as it offered a commanding view to the north and south giving the military control of the southwest section of the State.

The Mt. Horeb to Dodgeville section of railroad line was constructed in 1881 by the
(continued on attached sheet)

Snowmobiling Needs - kilometers (miles)
1975 supply 197.6 (123)
1985 needs 500 (311)

Existing Environment (continued)

Soils

The soil associations in the vicinity of the grade are the following:

Dodgeville Sogn - Dark colored, silty and moderately deep to thin. Generally found on fairly narrow ridgetops. The original vegetation was prairie grasses. These soils are suited to agriculture, but careful management is needed.

Dubuque, Deep, Fayette - Chiefly light-colored, deep Dubuque soils and soils of the Fayette series. Generally found on broad ridgetops that are gently sloping to sloping were formed under a hardwood forest. The soils in this association are likely to erode and require careful management if used for agriculture.

Dubuque, Steep, Stony and Rocky Land - This soil association is made up mainly of Dubuque soils and of areas of steep, stony and rocky land. The soils are in rolling areas along the major streams and on steep slopes between upland ridges and the bottoms of valleys. They are stony in many places. Outcrops of rock are common. Generally, this association is best suited to pasture or to trees.

Geology

Galena and Platteville dolomite make up the larger part of the bedrock in the vicinity of the grade. Areas of Prairie du Chien dolomite and of Upper Cambrian sandstone of various formations are exposed north of the grade. Outcrops of St. Peter sandstone occur along the deeper valleys. Maquoketa shale underlies some of the soils near Blue Mound. All of the uplands and many of the valley slopes and terraces are covered with a mantle of loess.

Water Features

Because the grade follows the Military Ridge, no major water features are encountered in its entire length. Several intermittent drainages are crossed on the south slope of Blue Mound.

2a) Flora (continued)

gay feathers, milkweed, ironweed and mountain mint are also present.

5) Other (continued)

Chicago-Tomah Railroad Company. It was the railroad company's intent to provide a through route to the northern Wisconsin timberlands, however, their venture was never completed. The line was purchased by Chicago-Northwestern in 1883.

The State Historical Society will be contacted to determine if any historical or archaeological features exist near the abandoned right-of-way. Terminus development outside the right-of-way may require an archaeological survey if Federal cost-sharing funds are requested.

There are no depots on the section of rail right-of-way to be acquired.

1) General Description (overview) (continued)

the railroad right-of-way will still accommodate the state trail corridor and not entail purchase by the Department of Natural Resources. To provide for continuity, rerouting the remaining 1.4 miles of proposed trail on existing roads, acquiring easements or outright purchase of an alternate corridor will be considered. In summary, 23.2 miles of the abandoned railroad right-of-way totalling about 281 acres are proposed to be acquired for a state trail.

Small (5-10 acres) privately owned parcels may also be purchased at Mt. Horeb (outside the city limits) and at Dodgeville near State Highway 23 for terminus development. Such acquisition would be contingent on purchase of the grade itself.

A second option to be considered is the exclusion of a section of grade in the communities of Barneveld and Ridgeway. Village streets would be used as alternate routes for this trail. This would reduce the total length of railroad corridor to be acquired to about 22.3 miles totalling 270 acres.

The entire grade parallels U.S. Highway 18-151. Access is also provided by State Highways 92, 78 and 23, plus numerous County Trunk highways.

Geographically, the right-of-way is located in a highly populated area of the state. The east end of the grade is 16 miles from Madison, 93 miles from Milwaukee and 162 miles from Chicago.

2) Purpose and Need (continued)

Needs and Use Potential

A. Current and projected needs analyzed from state plan for regions 2 and 3.

The summaries of the three recreational activities as listed in the 1977 State Outdoor Recreation Plan for regions 2 and 3 are as follows:

Region 2 (including Dane County)

Hiking Needs - kilometers (miles)

1975 supply 18.5 (11.5)

1978 needs 380 (236)

Biking Needs - kilometers (miles)

1975 supply 32.2 (20)

1985 needs 640 (397)

Snowmobile Needs - kilometers (miles)

1975 supply 149.1 (93)

1985 needs 2,070 (1,285)

Region 3 (including Iowa County)

Hiking Needs - kilometers (miles)

1975 supply 37.0 (23)

1985 needs 360 (224)

Biking Needs - kilometers (miles)

1975 supply 43.4 (27)

1985 needs 60 (37)

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

1) Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources (include quantities – sq. ft., cu. yds., etc.)

The ultimate goal is to acquire and convert the 23.5 mile grade into a recreational trail which is safe and enjoyable for public use. Once acquired, development would include planking and railing trestles, surfacing the trail and constructing rest stops and parking areas. Toilet facilities, drinking water, picnic tables, bike racks, grills, signing, etc., would be provided. Manipulation of natural features to accomplish this will be covered in a separate environmental assessment screening worksheet if the grade is purchased.

2) Manipulation of Aquatic Resources (include quantities – cfs, acre feet, MGD, etc.)

All 14 trestles have been inspected by our Engineering Section and reported as being in generally good condition. Upon acquisition, and/or development, if any drainage problems are evident, they will be studied by the Engineering Section for corrective action. The requirements of Chapters 30 and 31 of Wisconsin Statutes and Manual Code 3565.1 will be followed in the event of culvert and/or trestle replacement.

3) Structures

No known buildings that might be suitable for incorporation into the potential trail are known to exist within the villages along the grade. A number of culverts and bridges are located on the line and will be retained if the grade is developed for trail purposes.

4) Other

A title check indicates good title on the entire length of grade which is being proposed as a state trail.

5) Attach maps, plans and other descriptive material as appropriate (list)

1. State trail locator maps #1 and #2.
2. Plat maps showing location of grade.

PROBABLE ADVERSE AND BENEFICIAL IMPACTS (Include Indirect and Secondary Impacts)

1) Physical Impacts

Acquisition of the grade should have minor impact on the resource. Management practices would include maintaining fences on the right-of-way boundary and controlling weed growth.

2) Biological Impacts

If the grade is acquired and developed, it will be maintained as a scenic trail. The land will not be lost to urban sprawl and agricultural fields. Surface and ground water quality are not expected to be adversely affected by the proposal. Existing vegetation will be managed to control weeds and promote woody growth for animal habitat. Human use may be somewhat detrimental to the behavior pattern of some animals although it should be negligible in comparison to the existing train traffic.

3) Socioeconomic Impacts

a) Social

This grade has the potential of being a very popular state trail for hiking, biking and snowmobiling. It is located in a populous area of the state near several tourist attractions, has direct access to one state park and is within easy biking distance of two county parks, a village park and another state park. The grade intersects the Wisconsin Bikeway near the Village of Blue Mounds. If the right-of-way is sold to adjacent landowners, it will be lost as an outdoor recreation area. If acquired and developed, approximately 50,000 users are expected to use the trail annually.

b) Economic

If acquired for trail purposes, the state will pay aids in lieu of real estate taxes to the local townships in accordance with Section 70.113, Wis. Stats. The state pays a sum equivalent to 100 percent of the property taxes to the local government the first year. Each succeeding year, this sum is reduced by 10 percent. For the tenth year, the state pays 10 percent of the original sum. However, in no year shall the payment fall below 50 cents per acre. State aid in lieu of taxes remains at the amount paid in the tenth year for succeeding years.

(continued on attached sheet)

4) Other (include archaeological, historical, etc.; if none, so indicate.)

As the 100 foot right-of-way is already a disturbed zone within the rail corridor, no archaeological or historical sites should be affected by the proposal. No rare or endangered plant or animal species are known to be present along the grade.

3) b) Economic (continued)

Establishment of a successful trail will have a beneficial economic effect on the towns along its course, much like what has happened on the Elroy-Sparta Trail. Businesses such as bike rental stores, motels, restaurants, etc., should realize increased patronage.

PROBABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS THAT CANNOT BE AVOIDED

State acquisition of the grade should have minimal adverse impact on the existing environment. Individuals who desire to purchase the grade for industrial, commercial, residential, agricultural and other uses will not be able to do so which may adversely affect their plans and also cause loss of potential tax revenue from such development.

If development occurs, there will be some air pollution caused by auto and snowmobile emissions as well as a minimal increase in noise from autos, snowmobiles, bikers, hikers and other trail users. Some noise, air and water pollution may occur during the development of the facility.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

The right-of-way has historically been manipulated and used by man as a rail corridor. Now that the rail line has been abandoned, the corridor will continue to serve man. A small portion of the right-of-way will be used by DOT for relocating and improving U.S. Highway 18-151. The remaining portion will serve the public as a state trail.

If the land is acquired and developed, the grade will be indefinitely committed to state trail usage. Its total recreational value is further enhanced by its proximity to the Wisconsin Bikeway, several state and county parks, a village park and local tourist attractions. The long-term enhancement of these lands as a recreational corridor has a far greater value to society as a whole than any short-term private users.

IRREVERSIBLE OR IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES IF ACTION IS IMPLEMENTED

1) Energy

Some manpower, fuel and equipment is used in inspecting and negotiating for the grade's acquisition. This and any additional energy consumed if the trail is developed will be permanently expended.

2) Archaeological and historic features or sites

No known sites.

3) Other

Unless an unforeseen usage for the grade develops in the future, the right-of-way will be irreversibly committed to trail use. If later needs dictate change and approval is granted by the Department of Interior (LAWCON 6F requirements), the land could be converted to a transportation corridor. Any facility development would, for all practical purposes, be irretrievable.

ALTERNATIVES (No Action-Enlarge-Reduce-Modify-Other Locations and/or Methods. Discuss and describe fully with particular attention to alternatives which might avoid some or all adverse environmental effects.)

Three alternates exist. The first is DNR acquisition, development, maintenance and management of the grade as a state trail. Such action would assure retention of the resource for recreational purposes. This alternative would provide for the full compliment of trail facilities and use by bikers, hikers and snowmobiling. The trail would be surfaced, the bridges planked and railed and a rest area would be provided at Blue Mound State Park. Toilets, water and picnic facilities would be provided at the two terminuses. Where possible, local facilities would be utilized if made available.

The second alternative would provide the same basic facilities as the first alternative but would be the responsibility of county and local units of government. This action would retain the resource for recreational trail purposes. The role of the DNR would include encouraging local leadership to plan and develop the trail based on uniform trail development guidelines.

A third alternative would provide for no acquisition and development of the right-of-way for recreational trail use. The portion not needed for highway purposes could be purchased by adjacent property owners and other interested individuals. Such action would cause the grade to be lost for recreational trail use but would allow various forms of commercial and private development desired by some interests. The need for additional snowmobile trails would have to be met by lease of private land or other arrangement.

EVALUATION (Discuss each category. Attach additional sheets and other pertinent information if necessary.)

- 1) As a result of this action, is it likely that other events or actions will happen that may significantly affect the environment? If so, list and discuss. (Secondary effects)

Based on experience gained from other state trails, it is unlikely that other events or actions will occur which may significantly alter the environment. Traffic volumes on roads adjacent to the proposed trail should not increase significantly. Police and fire protection will be provided by the DNR. If supplementary protection is needed, it should be limited and therefore should not cause an increase in local agency manpower and equipment needs. New commercial and recreational development locating adjacent to the trail should also be limited in nature based on past occurrences near other state trails. (Continued on —

- 2) Does the action alter the environment so a new physical, biological or socio-economic environment would exist? (New environmental effect)

The abandoned grade will provide a safe off-road trail for bikers, hikers and snowmobilers. Development will generate revenue for local contractors and local businesses should realize increased sales due to trail user purchases. Aids in lieu of taxes will be paid by the state to local government units and thereby increase tax revenue. Subsequent development will slightly alter the grade, trestles and land used for rest areas. Vegetation will be allowed to grow in the margins of the right-of-way, however weeds will be controlled.

- 3) Are the existing environmental features that would be affected by the proposed action scarce, either locally or statewide? If so, list and describe. (Geographically scarce)

Locally, off-road trail resources are very scarce. If not acquired, the resource will be lost to private acquisition and development.

- 4) Does the action and its effect(s) require a decision which would result in influencing future decisions? Describe. (Precedent setting)

No.

- 5) Discuss and describe concerns which indicate a serious controversy? (Highly controversial)

Acquisition and eventual development of the grade as a recreational trail does not appear to be controversial.

- 6) Does the action conflict with official agency plans or with any local, state or national policy? If so, how? (Inconsistent with long-range plans or policies)

No. The DOT and our Department are closely coordinating their planning efforts so that there will be no conflict over intended use of the abandoned right-of-way.

- 7) While the action by itself may be limited in scope, would repeated actions of this type result in major or significant impacts to the environment? (Cumulative impacts)

Based on other state trails which utilize existing railroad right-of-ways, converting the railroad grade into a biking, hiking and snowmobile trail will have very little impact on the existing disturbed rail corridor. Conversion to trail use will be beneficial to animal habitat, as trees and shrubs are allowed to grow in the right-of-way.

- 8) Will the action modify or destroy any historical, scientific or archaeological site?

No known scientific, historical or archaeological sites exist within the grade corridor.

- 9) Is the action irreversible? Will it commit a resource for the foreseeable future? (Foreclose future options)

If acquired, the grade, except for those portions used for the highway relocation, will be used for trail purposes. Department of the Interior approval would be needed to implement any changes due to LAWCON (6F) funding requirements.

- 10) Will action result in direct or indirect impacts on ethnic or cultural groups or alter social patterns? (Socio-cultural impacts)

Interaction between trail users and people living along the grade will likely take place. Information provided by people living adjacent to the Elroy-Sparta Trail indicates that such dialogue is an enjoyable benefit related to the trail. Based on past experience at other state trails, trespassing and poor social behavior are almost non-existent.

- 11) Other

None.

1) Secondary Effects (continued)

Acquisition of the Mt. Horeb to Dodgeville segment of the 101-mile abandoned railroad grade (Mt. Horeb to Lancaster to Cuba City) for state trail and highway improvement purposes will leave a balance of the 76 miles of abandoned grade. Under the authority of Chapter 29, Laws of 1977, it is the Department of Transportation's prerogative to decide what will be done with the excess railroad right-of-way.

EIA 117. KRES - DRYVILLE TSP14 FILE - 514

PERSONNEL AND TITLES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT

| Personnel and Title | Contact | Comments |
|--|-------------------------|---|
| | Natural Resources Board | Authorized the Department to do a feasibility study on the 101.5 mile Klevenville-Lancaster railroad right-of-way. |
| | Natural Resources Board | Gave preliminary approval for the Department to request the DOT to exercise the state's first right to acquire the grade subject to several conditions. |
| (See Attachment B for additional information.) | | |

RECOMMENDATION

EIS Not Required

Analysis of the expected impacts of this proposal is of sufficient scope and detail to conclude that this is not a major action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In my opinion therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required before the Department undertakes this action.

Refer to Office of the Secretary

Major and Significant Action: Prepare EIS

Additional factors, if any, affecting the evaluator's recommendation:

The action of acquiring an abandoned railroad grade for the purpose of converting it into a state trail does not constitute a major action which would significantly affect the human environment.

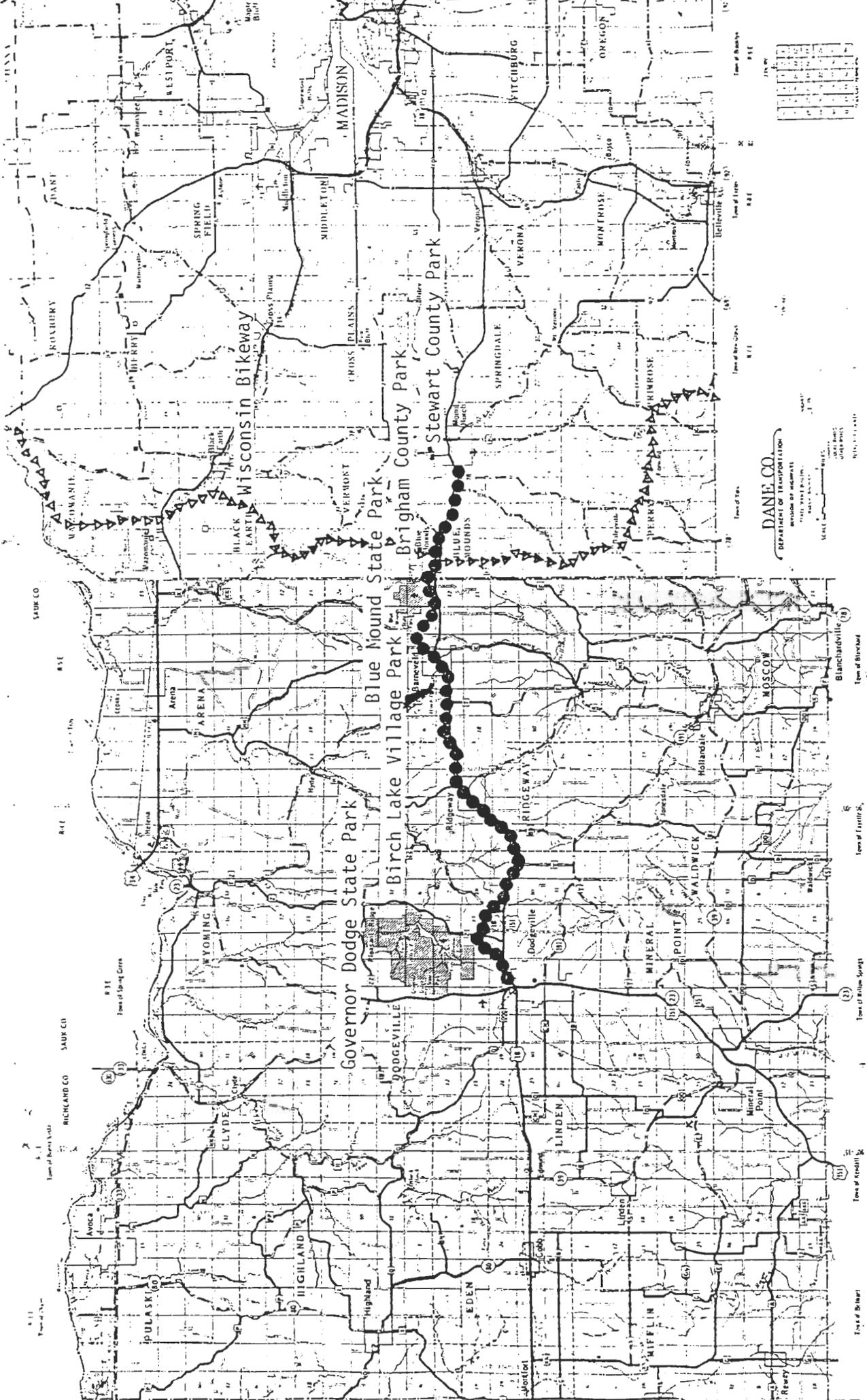
Any preliminary Natural Resources Board action regarding the purchase of abandoned railroad grades is contingent upon meeting the requirements of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act, consideration of the title as indicated in a title report, and the purchase price.

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| SIGNATURE OF EVALUATOR <i>D. J. Luthack</i> | DATE 8-20-80 |
|--|-----------------|

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| CERTIFIED TO BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH WEPA | |
| DISTRICT OR BUREAU DIRECTOR (OR DESIGNEE) <i>D. J. Luthack</i> | DATE 8/21/80 |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| APPROVED (if required, by Manual Code) | |
| DIRECTOR, BEI <i>D. J. Luthack</i> | DATE 11-1-80 |

This decision is not final until approved by the appropriate Director and/or Director, BEI.



IOWA CO.
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
 STATE OF IOWA
 SCALE 1" = 1 MILE

●●●●● Mt. Horeb - Dodgeville Grade

DANE CO.
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
 STATE OF WISCONSIN
 SCALE 1" = 1 MILE

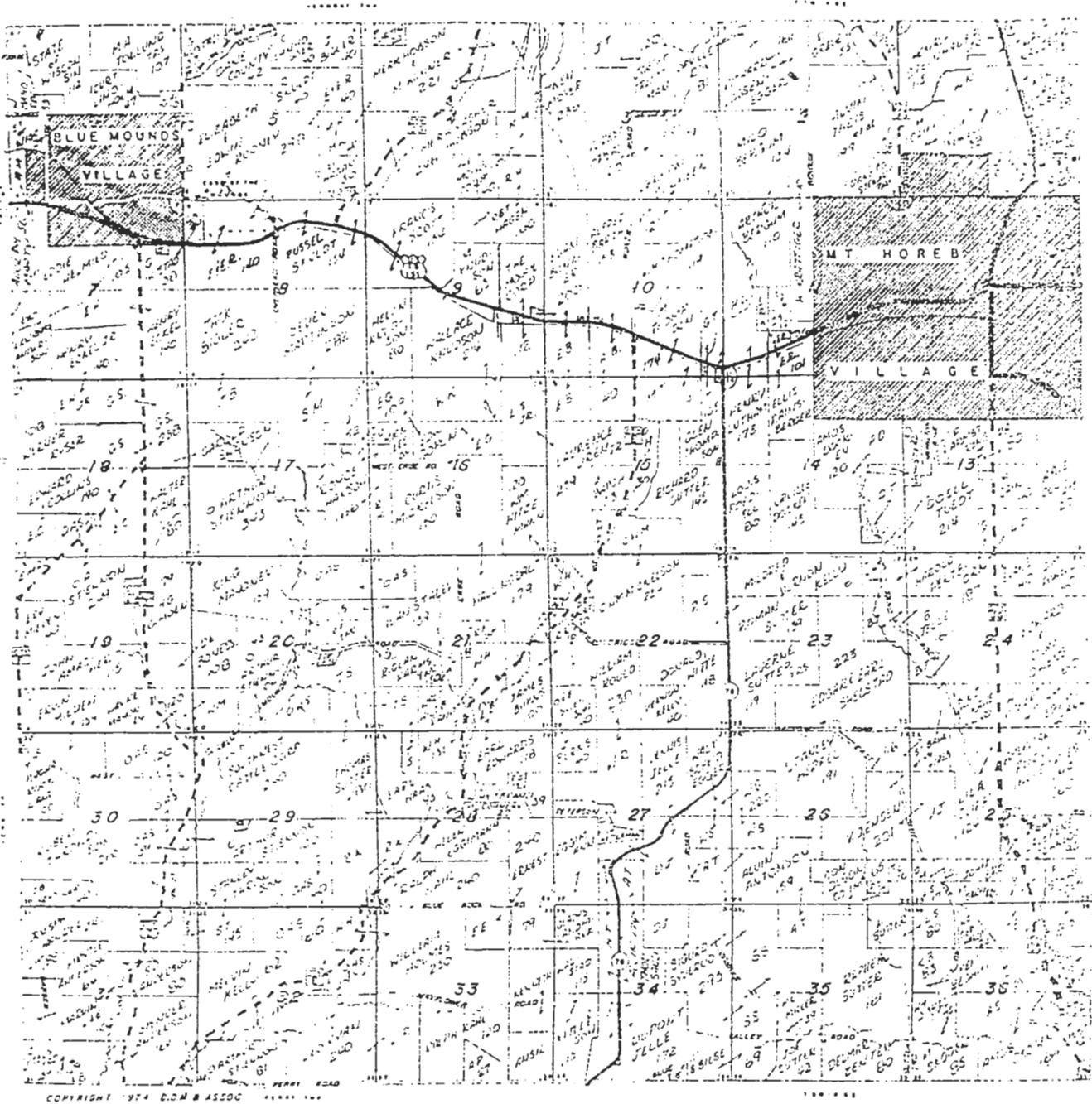
TOWN OFFICERS

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 Supervisors Leo Ryan Rt. 1, Blue Mounds
 Edward Collins Rt. 1, Blue Mounds
 Clerk Henry Eckel, Jr. Rt. 1, Blue Mounds
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T.6N. — R.6E.

BLUE MOUNDS

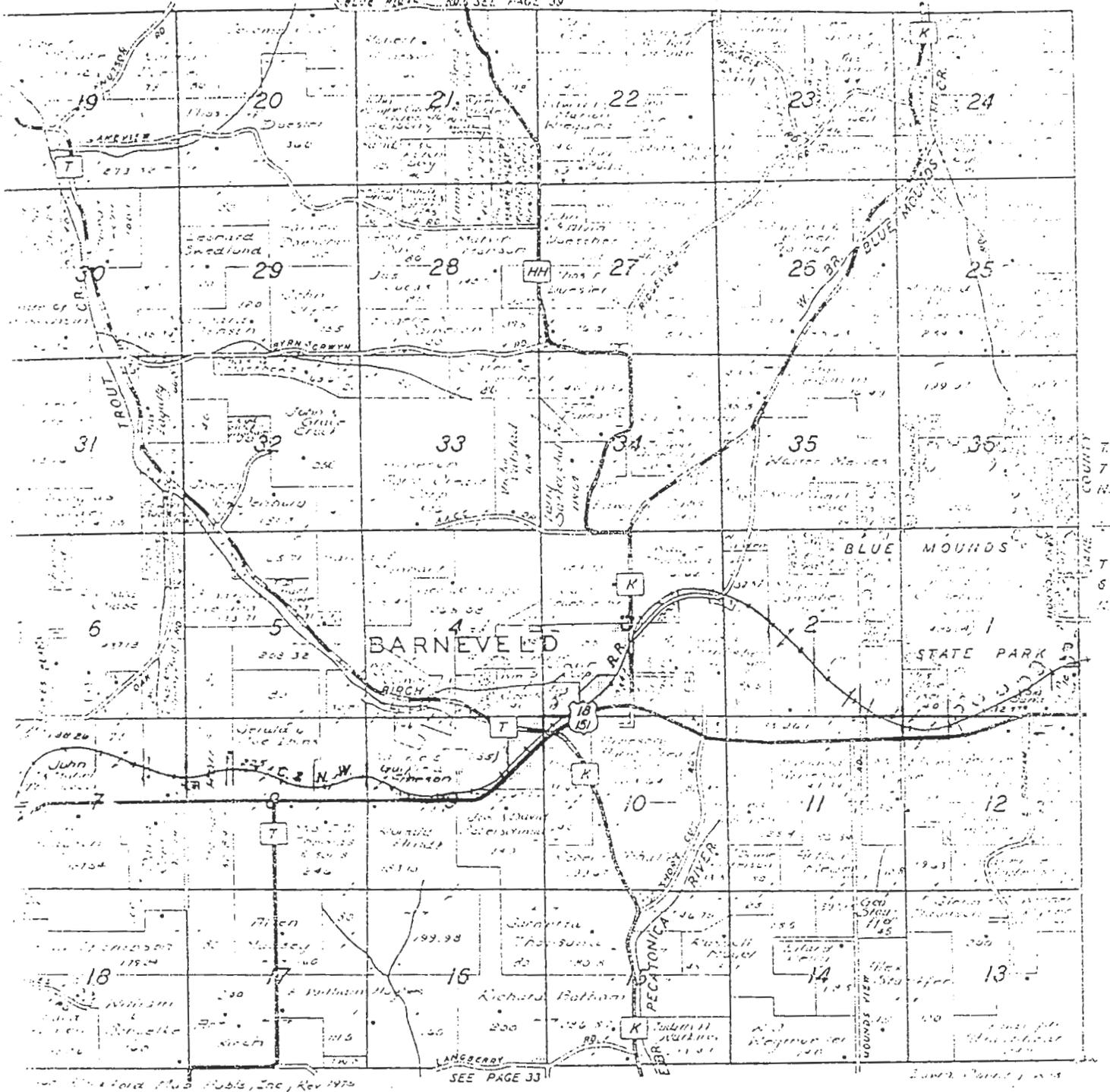
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SEE PAGE 33

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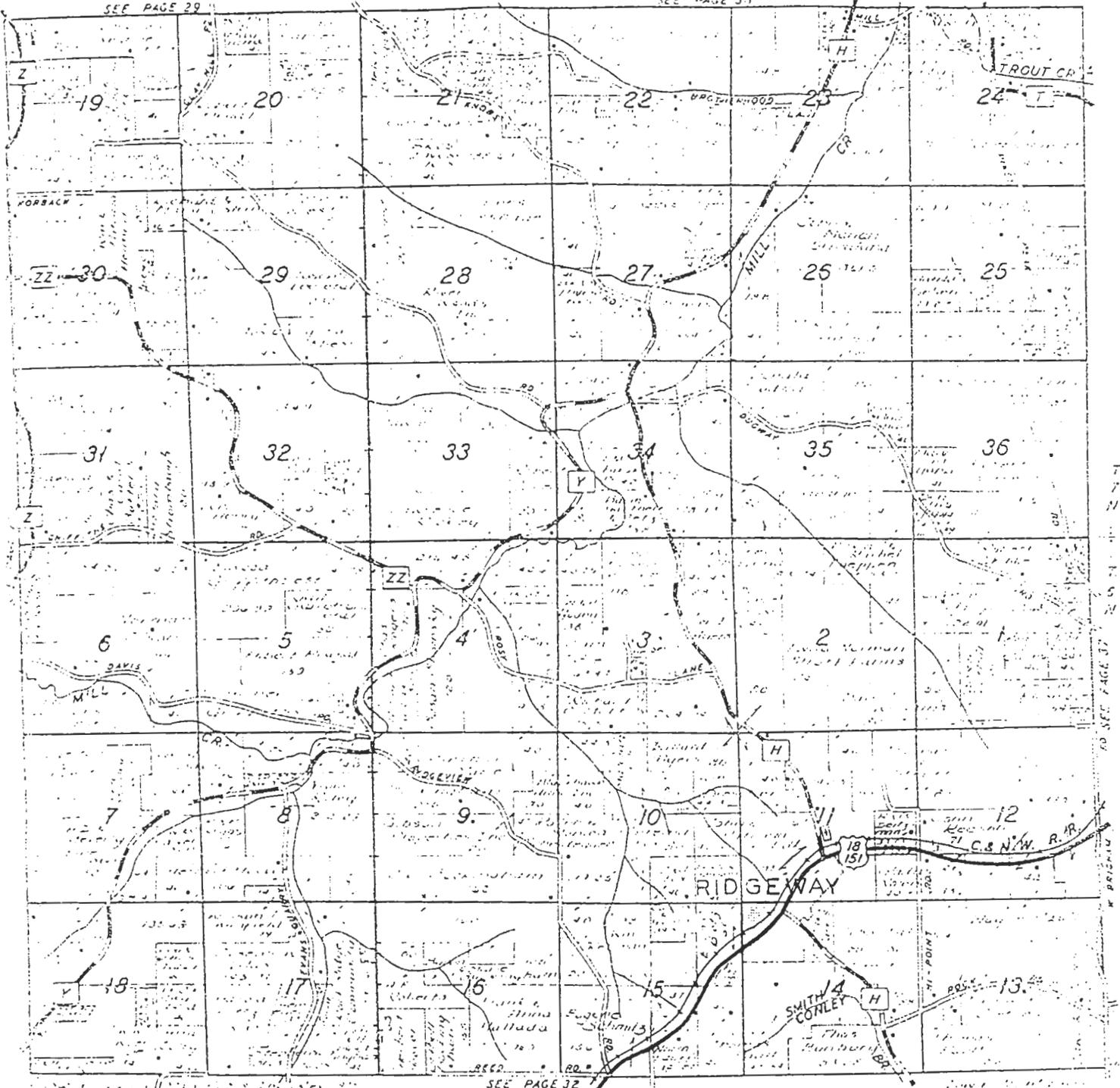
Walter Durtschi
 437-8795

John Wittwer
 437-3618

Ralph Durtschi
 437-8661

SEE PAGE 29

SEE PAGE 31



DODGEVILLE TWP. --- RIDGEWAY TWP.

SEE PAGE 32

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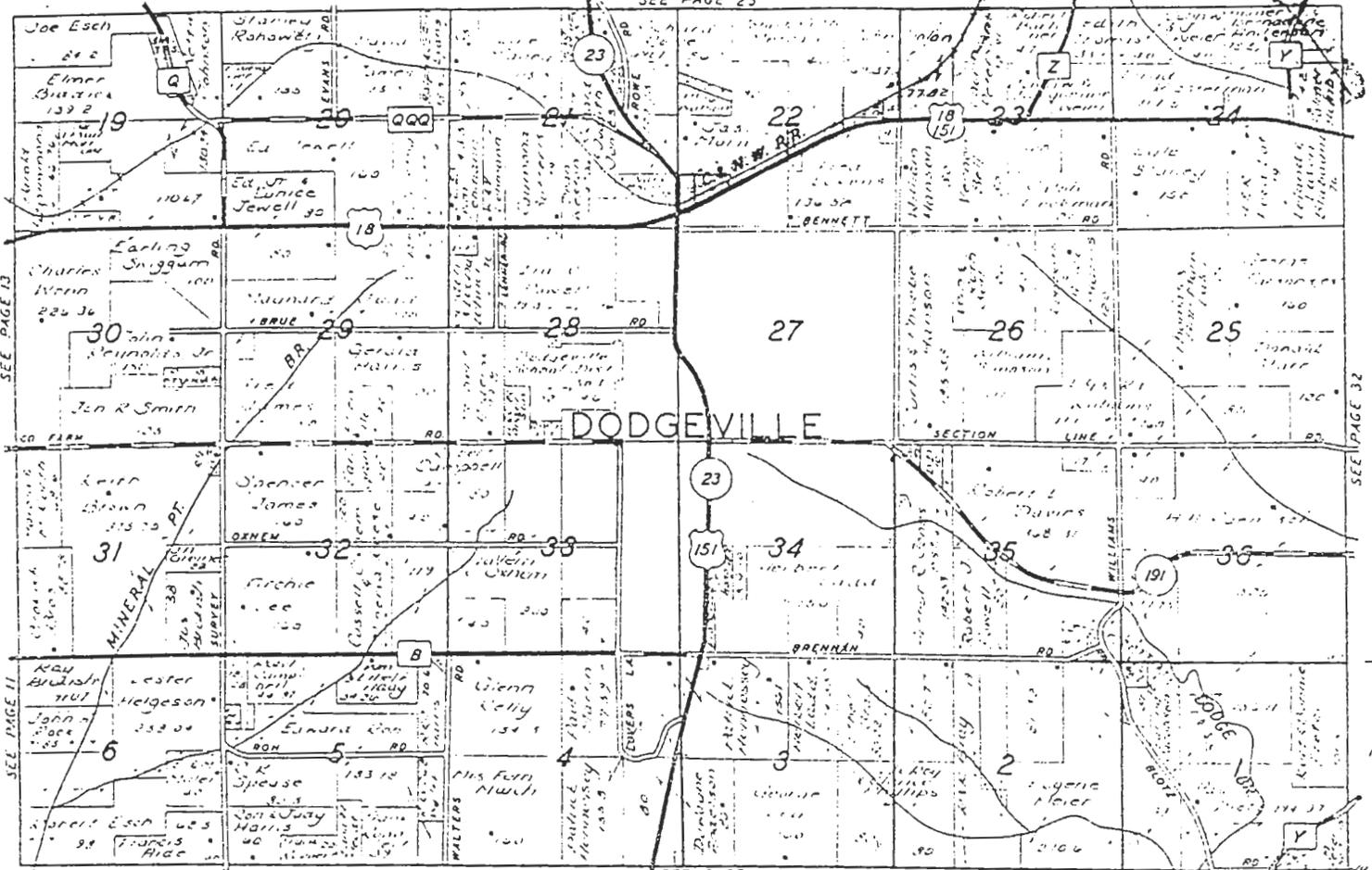


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TOM COLLINS: 437-5697 or 924-2431

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Funeral Home

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Date: October 8, 1982

File Ref: 1600

To: L. Posekany - EI/3

From: D. Weizenicker

D. Weizenicker

Subject: Amendment to EIASW #2716 - Mt. Horeb to Verona Extension

On May 12, 1982, the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company applied for the abandonment of 16.1 miles of railroad grade between the Village of Mt. Horeb and a location about three miles east of Verona. On June 18, 1982, the Interstate Commerce Commission endorsed this request. The corridor connects directly to the 23.5-mile long Military Ridge State Park Trail.

At their July 1982 meeting, the Natural Resources Board authorized the Department to enter into negotiations for the purchase of the 16.1-mile extension of the Military Ridge Trail. If a mutually acceptable purchase price is reached, the purchase will be brought to the Board for final approval.

The following amends the approved environmental impact assessment screening worksheet (#2716) which was prepared for the acquisition and development of the abandoned railroad grade between Mt. Horeb and Dodgeville, now known as the Military Ridge State Park Trail. This amendment includes the acquisition and development of the 16.1-mile extension from Mt. Horeb eastward through Verona.

Project:

1) General Description (overview)

With the proposed 16.1-mile extension, the Military Ridge Trail will provide almost 40 miles of trail for biking, hiking, and snowmobiling.

A small five-acre privately-owned parcel may also be purchased for the eastern terminus three miles east of Verona. Such acquisition would be contingent on purchase of the grade. Terminus development would include the construction of a 100-car parking lot, picnic area, and a small trail office building with public restrooms.

Except for within the communities, there are only about 10 at grade road crossings along the entire route. The most significant is the Highway 18-151 crossing located about two miles west of Verona. This highway is a heavily-traveled road with a speed limit at this point of 55 MPH. County Trunk PD between Verona and Mount Horeb and County Trunk PB east of Verona are narrower roads with moderate traffic counts. The rest of the road crossings have light traffic counts.

2) Purpose and Need

Needs:

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 1981 outlines a need for trail-oriented recreational activities, particularly bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing, for the study area (Region 9).

The Dane County Regional Planning Commission's Plan for Parks and Open Space (1970) also outlines a need for increased activities for all of the uses mentioned above.

Discussions with officials from the City of Madison Transportation Department and the Parks Division have yielded the same conclusion.

The right-of-way meets the intent of a state park trail as outlined in NR 1.30 as well as satisfying the requirements of M.C. 2102.1.

Estimated Cost and Funding Source:

Acquisition from the railroad company is estimated to be slightly higher than the \$820 per acre paid for the Military Ridge Trail.

Estimated development costs including site preparation, trail surfacing, planking and railing of bridges, signing, fencing, parking, drinking water, toilet facilities, trailside shelters, landscaping, picnic tables, grills, and bicycle racks is expected to be about \$360,000.

Annual Operations Costs if operated by Blue Mound State Park staff is expected to be about \$8,000.

It is expected this grade could be an extension to the Military Ridge Trail, therefore, the above costs would be added to those of the Military Ridge Trail.

Time Schedule:

Purchase of the 16.1-mile extension is expected to take place early 1983 if negotiations are successful. Minimal development may be initiated that same year.

Existing Environment:

1) Physical

Water Features

The Sugar River is the only significant water feature as it meanders generally along the same route as the grade from Klevenville to Verona. It and its tributaries cross the grade at least six times.

2) Biological

a) Flora

As is typical of railroad grades, vegetation varies greatly. In upland areas away from the grade, vegetation is generally oak-hickory woodlots. In lowland areas, vegetation varies from cattail marsh to willow groves. From Mount Horeb to Klevenville, the right-of-way is quite overgrown and shady. From Klevenville to the eastern terminus, the character of the grade is quite open and exposed, with only occasional woodlots and shaded areas.

3) Social

The largest community on the grade is Mount Horeb (population 3,000), a tourist and local trade center. Others are Verona (population 2,500), and the hamlets of Klevenville and Riley. The Madison metropolitan area (population 300,000) continues to expand westward towards the grade. The eastern terminus of the corridor is only 2 1/2 miles from the City's Beltline Highway. In addition, Mount Horeb has expanded eastward, and for about a mile, the grade passes through growing subdivisions.

4) Other

Undesirable adjacent land use is generally limited along the route to a quarry at Klevenville and one near Verona.

A preliminary review of the title indicates that there are few reversionary problems.

Proposed Environmental Change:

1) Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources

The ultimate goal is to acquire and develop the 16.1-mile grade as an extension of the existing Military Ridge State Park Trail. Once acquired, development would include planking and railing the trestles, surfacing the trail, and constructing a terminus facility east of Verona. Parking for 100 cars, drinking water, picnic tables, bike racks, and a small trail office building with public toilet facilities would be provided at the

terminus. Manipulation of natural features to accomplish this will be covered in a separate environmental assessment screening worksheet if the grade is purchased.

2) Structures

There are approximately 33 bridges (mostly of the pile type) totaling about 2,000 feet in length. In addition, there are numerous culverts. Of the bridges, about 23 are water crossings, 2 are highway crossings, and 8 are dry crossings. The most significant span is the 122-foot trestle over Highway 18-151 on Mount Horeb's east side. In addition, there is an 85-foot street overpass in the Village of Mt. Horeb.

The railroad company owns no buildings along the corridor.

3) Attach maps, plans, and other descriptive material as appropriate.

a) Locator map

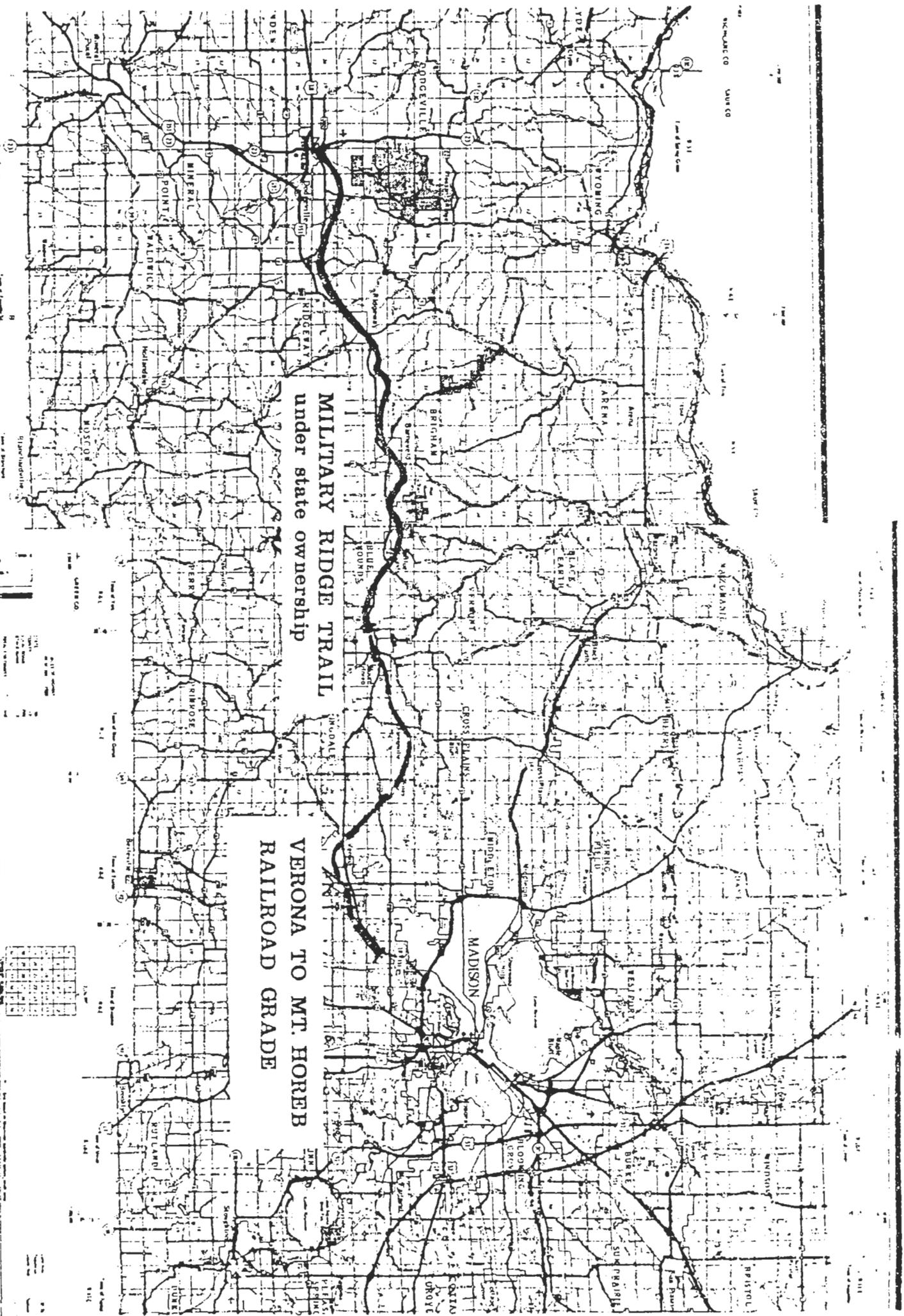
DJK:sjs

Attach.

cc: J. L. Treichel - P&R/4

D. Kulhanek - P&R/4 ←

NEWARK CO JUN CO



MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL
 under state ownership

VERONA TO MT. HOREB
 RAILROAD GRADE

| Color | Symbol | Description |
|-------|--------|-------------|
| Blue | — | Water |
| Green | — | Vegetation |
| Brown | — | Contours |
| Black | — | Roads |
| Black | — | Railroads |
| Black | — | Boundaries |
| Black | — | Other |

| Symbol | Description |
|--------|-------------------|
| — | 1:25,000 Scale |
| — | 1:50,000 Scale |
| — | 1:100,000 Scale |
| — | 1:200,000 Scale |
| — | 1:500,000 Scale |
| — | 1:1,000,000 Scale |

| Symbol | Description |
|--------|-------------------|
| — | 1:25,000 Scale |
| — | 1:50,000 Scale |
| — | 1:100,000 Scale |
| — | 1:200,000 Scale |
| — | 1:500,000 Scale |
| — | 1:1,000,000 Scale |

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

Date: August 3, 1983

File Ref: 2510

To: L. Posekany - EI/3

From: D. Weizenicker

Subject: Update Amendment to EIAW #2716 - Military Ridge State Park Trail
(Revised 8/3/83)

The purpose of this amendment is to update the amendment to EIAW #2716 because of additional information provided by the completion of the Draft Conceptual Military Ridge State Park Trail Master Plan.

On April 29, 1983, the Department acquired the 16.1-mile addition to the trail between Mount Horeb and Madison. The Department is now preparing plans for development of the total 39.6-mile long trail between Dodgeville and Madison.

Project Summary

1. General Description (Brief overview)

The land for the terminus east of Verona would total about four acres to be leased from Dane County. The total state ownership as of August 1, 1983, was approximately 472.6 acres out of a goal of 490 acres.

Development would be phased. Beginning in late summer of 1983, Phase I development would include planking, curbing and railing of bridges; fencing, signing, surfacing with limestone screenings at eight feet in width, and partial development of the trail termini at Verona and Dodgeville. The Verona terminus would include parking for 50 cars and a concessions-toilet-storage building. The terminus at Dodgeville would be limited to a 30-car parking area. Phase II would include the completion of the above mentioned termini with the expansion of parking to 100 cars at Verona and to 60 cars at Dodgeville. A similar building to that in Verona would be constructed at Dodgeville. Four additional access points at Mount Horeb, Blue Mounds, Barneveld, and Ridgeway would be constructed and have a total of 130 parking spaces as well as a variety of comforts such as toilets, drinking water, picnic facilities, and information. Campgrounds and connecting trails for trail users would be constructed at Blue Mound and Governor Dodge State Parks. The connecting trails would be constructed to conform to the existing contours. The Military Ridge Trail surface would be widened from eight feet to 12 feet in areas where use warranted.

4. Estimated Cost and Funding Source

Estimated total development costs for the project are expected to be about \$930,000.

Proposed Physical Change

1. Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources

Development of the 39.6-mile long trail would be as is described in the preceding page under the heading General Description. Trail entrance visitors stations will be located near Verona and Dodgeville and will provide a small office space, storage, and a sales and concession area for bicycle rental. Plans have not been completed for the buildings. It may be possible to tie in to existing city utilities (water and sewer) at one or both terminuses. If not, a septic tank and drain field will be required in addition to a well and water system. Size of the drain field will be dependent on soil conditions. All excavated material will be spread on-site, graded and landscaped to improve surface drainage and eliminate hauling of surplus soil.

The four-acre site east of Verona to be leased from Dane County for the east terminus is a disturbed former building site containing several large mature trees. It receives periodic mowing by the County. There is also a group of active springs that flow into Badger Mill Creek. The terminus facilities (parking lot, toilets, and trail entrance visitor station) will be located so that the spring flow will not be disrupted and there will be minimal impact on the site. Land for the Dodgeville terminus has not been acquired.

The disposal of old ties and other debris as left by the railroad abandonment would be in accordance with Department regulations.

By using the Madison bikeway system, the Monona bike path, and the designated Dane County bike route, it could be possible for bikers to tie-in with future recreational trails extending eastward.

2. Structures

The total number of bridges on the Military Ridge Trail is 45.

Affected Environment

13. Social/Economic

An additional community found along the trail is the City of Fitchburg.

