

## Ice Age Trail Essay

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I was interested in section hiking the IAT when I moved back to Wisconsin 15 years ago. It was retirement (and several hiking groups) that made it feasible.

I hiked connecting routes and picked up garbage until I realized that the garbage was largely due to a few individuals. One area was all Michelob beer cans, another area was all Starbucks cups, the next area was all McDonalds refuse, etc. This implied to me that the garbage was a result of a local person who repeated the same behavior over and over. That "ah-ha" moment was when I quit picking up garbage - even though it really bothered me to see it. There were a few times when I did a bit of clean up, but no more entire connecting routes. Sure wish we had an effective way to stop the littering though!

I am so grateful to those who had the vision of the IAT and to those who created (and continue to create) this incredible trail.

As for my summary of my hike - I had several long breaks - the first was due to an interpersonal conflict which I was not a part of, but resulted in dissolution of the hiking group. It took awhile to figure how to get back out there. The second was due to a ski injury which necessitated an ACL replacement and follow up rehab. I hiked whatever sections fit into my travel plans and schedule. The drive times turned me into an audio book addict! I became very focused on finishing in Spring, 2023. I will relive the trail as I sort through the many photos I took! Since that will require that I am seated at my computer, it is hard to say when that will be...

And FYI - I Love the prairies the most!