FALL 2023

ICE AGE DRIFT

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www.dane.iceagetrail.org

ICE AGE TRAIL
A L L I A N C E

IN THIS ISSUE:

How Does New Ice Age Trail Get Made?

By Andrew Bent

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a work in progress, with new trail sections constantly being built. Dane County is no exception. In the last 10 years, new Ice Age Trail in Dane County was created at Springfield Hill, Bourbon St., Mammoth's Back, Old Sauk Pass and Moraine Kettles, and significant reroutes were added on both sides of the road at Lodi Marsh. Folks who have been around longer know that the trails at Table Bluff, Hickory Hill (Andersen Preserve), University Ridge Golf Course through to Reddan Soccer Park, and Montrose are all less than 20 years old. So: How does new Ice Age Trail get made? It's a long, involved process – but a quick overview follows.

The key first requirement for new Ice Age Trail is land. Owned outright, or in some cases, accessible through a legal easement (which can be as narrow as 50 ft.). Land not already owned by partners such as Wisconsin DNR or Dane County Parks can only be acquired from willing sellers, at the current appraised value. This requires funding: from Dane County, towns/cities, federal sources, private donors, or importantly, the State of Wisconsin's popular but under-funded Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Often, a combination of those sources is used. Citizen support voiced to government leaders helps immensely to ensure funding for land that will be enjoyed by thousands of people for decades to come. But crucially, land acquisition depends on willing sellers. Ice Age Trail Alliance staff often play a central role in fostering relationships and coordinating these acquisitions.

Only some properties have trails added soon after purchase. Why? If a property is not large enough to justify a trail system that loops and returns to the parking area, then a set of contiguous lands that allow for a road-to-road connection is needed. Once available, that's when the fun begins…
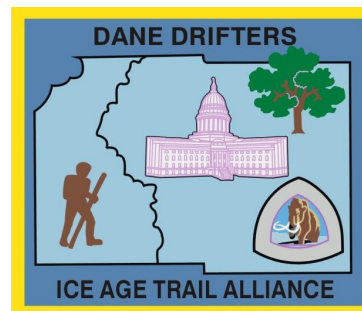
Dane Drifters Update for Fall 2023

By Gary Wensing

With Fall coming, we'll have our annual Hike-A-Thon and the Mammoth Hike Challenge. So be sure to work on your Dane Drifter award too!! For a small registration cost ($10 for IATA members, $12 for non-members and $6 for a companion to a registered hiker), you can earn a patch, a certificate of completion for hiking all of the segments of IAT in Dane County, and support the Dane Co Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance.

Remember, there's no time frame to finish and the (dreaded for some) road walks are not required. So there's no reason to not register and start working on this award. And be sure to check out the other article about registration being on-line on www.iceagetrail.org.

Whether you're working on the program or not, everyone is welcome to join us on group hikes on our trail segments. Check out the IATA calendar for hiking events as well as the Chapter Meet-Up group: (https://www.meetup.com/Ice-Age-Trail-Alliance-Rock-Dane-County-Chapter/.) The group hikes are a great way to work on the program. Since our last newsletter, twenty-one more have finished. Congratulations to these hikers.

If you have any questions on the program, contact Gary Wensing at kensinginn@tds.net with questions.

Connectors & Segments

Terry Aittama, Plover, WI
Noelle Chambers, Madison, WI
Patrick Deming, Madison, WI
Jeni Heinemann, Pewaukee, WI
Steve Konkol, Sun Prairie, WI A
Kathy Larabee, Wilmot, WI
Christopher Luhman, DeForest, WI
Christopher Miller, Milwaukee, WI

Emily Miller, Milwaukee, WI
Avis Peters, Altoona, WI
Franara Radtke, Ripon, WI
John Reinartz, Milwaukee, WI
Jan Reinartz, Milwaukee, WI
Denyse Schroeder, Altoona, WI
Katrina Serwe, Campbellsport, WI
Beth Williamson, Chetek, WI

Segments

Steve Bartunek, Madison, WI
Shanna Mitchell, Sun Prairie, WI
Lynsey Ray, Madison, WI

Jacob Ray, Madison, WI
Sara Weideman, Waukesha, WI

Volunteer Spotlight: Gary Molz

By Lynsey Ray

Gary Molz has traveled great distances to hike some of the most iconic trails-the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, the Chilkoot Gold Rush trail in Alaska and even Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. But the Ice Age Trail (IAT), right in his own backyard, remains among his top five favorite hikes. Gary shares much gratitude to the thousands of people who, over many years, made the IAT a wonderful Wisconsin asset come to life.

Gary began volunteering 3 years ago by mowing and maintaining the Dane County Raymond Road segment. He started volunteering around the same time he and his hiking community decided to embark on a goal to complete the Ice Age Trail, in order, and segment-by-segment from the Western to Eastern Terminus. Gary, and his hiking community made the decision to hike the trail together on Memorial Day, 2020. They started their 1,000+ mile journey 12-days later, on June 6. The group accomplished their goal on June 6, 2023.

"Each step is special in its own way" so Gary doesn't have a favorite segment of the trail, but he encourages anyone who has experienced the trail to get involved now, don't wait. "Volunteering plays a very small part in giving people the wonderful opportunity to experience nature, learn about Wisconsin history and see people, towns, and villages throughout this great state."

Pictured left to right-Kent and Lynn Rawhouser, Susan Rather, Jeff Tews, Gary Molz, Dan and Tam Knickmeier

Continued: How Does New Ice Age Trail Get Made?

"Trail Layout and Design" is the jargon term for a process that is both technical and aesthetic. The small TLD team, led by IATA staff with volunteer input, must think well into the future. Where are the property lines and what will transpire beyond them? What is the likely user load, and hence desired trail width and parking capacity? Should we create a looped trail system or will this be a thru-section? What is the current vegetation and what are the likely or preferred future ecosystems? This last question is especially important in Dane County, with the IATA chapter's strong capacity to convert lands to prairie and oak savanna and then maintain those ecosystems through hundreds of hours of stewardship.

Trail layout often starts by discovering a few anchor points – natural features such as rock outcrops or rewarding viewpoints that form a prime attraction of that property - as well as the best allowable property entrance/exit points. The overall hiker experience – what ecosystems will they pass through, what pleasing "rooms" can we have them visit – is also a primary consideration. And then terrain considerations exert their pull.

Long experience has shown that our trails should climb at no more than 10% (10 feet up for every 100 horizontal feet traversed), with rare exceptions made where rocky soils and/or constructed steps allow. Did you know that a well-designed hiking trail must also be out-sloped to shed water to the side rather than channeling water along the trail? Water runoff management is a central attribute of every foot of a sustainable trail. Flat ground is to be avoided; cross-slope is preferred. Any trail that climbs at more than one-third of the local slope will become a water-channel (example: for a 15% land slope, the trail should climb at no more than 5%). On-site, each bit of land meanders up/down/in/out, and the TLD team works to find a physically and aesthetically pleasing route that adheres to the above rules. But what about: "How hard will it be to build?" Typically, that consideration takes a back seat to aesthetics. We are blessed with volunteers who make it happen.

Brent Sieling, Beth Shimmyo and Ed Spoon finish clearing a new section of trail above a retaining wall of native logs" (Photo Credit: Andrew Bent)

Will bridges or boardwalks be required? TLD teams occasionally can avoid these through strategic trail placement, but a 1200 mile through-trail with limited property width will inevitably have to cross many low spots. More typically, the choice is "Where?" – and many hikers enjoy the bridges and boardwalks.

The TLD team places ribbon flagging to sketch out and then refine trail ideas. Volunteer and land manager input is gathered. Once a preferred route is selected, even closer attention is paid to all technical aspects of trail design and construction. Pin flags are placed along the proposed trail centerline, one every ten feet, to guide the volunteer trail construction crews.

All proposed new National Scenic Trail construction must go through project review overseen by the National Park Service, which can take as much as a year. Professional archaeological and ecological surveys of the proposed trail corridor are contracted out – with "hits" requiring a re-route of the trail (the TLD team can often predict and avoid such issues). Sometimes, trail construction date restrictions are imposed – for example, to protect the nesting season of a rare bird or reptile species at that site. All volunteers learn: you can't just go out and build trail!

Most recent sections of the Ice Age Trail in Dane County were constructed through the combination of a major IATA Mobile Skills Crew (MSC) work week and many preceding and following construction events led by Dane County Chapter volunteers. The MSC work days are grand events - a typical day will include 50 to 150 people out in the field, creating trails or supporting the effort, with free food for all. Trained volunteer trail crew leaders from across the state gather to lead volunteer crews - and enjoy the camaraderie. Much of the trail tread is constructed with hand tools, primarily pick-mattocks and McLeod rakes. Much dirt is moved, retaining structures get built from native rock or wood where needed, and some crews are put to work on bridge or boardwalk construction. If you are even slightly curious, come out and try it for a few hours this October at Old Sauk Pass road in Dane County! (see https://www.iceagetrail.org/our-work/trail-building-maintenance/msc-program/) One of the main Chapter jobs prior to an MSC event is trail corridor clearing, and crucial follow up work is often done by the Dane Chapter to construct unbuilt sections (check the chapter event calendar for work dates). After trail signage crews have installed posts, signage and yellow blazes, the new trail is open for use.

How many person-hours does it take to build a trail? For the Ice Age Trail, the estimate averages to about 1000 person-hours per mile of trail (or 18 person-hours per 100 ft.). And every hour is worth it.

Dane Drifters is On-Line!!

By Gary Wensing

Thanks to changes made with the Alliance office (big thanks to Lysianne Unruh and Eric Sherman!), the Dane Drifter program now has the option to register and pay on-line! You can go to the Alliance's website where you'll find the link for Dane Drifters. You can pay on-line and download the maps of trails in Dane County, but you can also certify that you've completed all the segments (either just the off-road segments or the segments and connecting routes). I'll receive reports of anyone who marks themselves as complete and then mail your patch and certificate out.

The option to fill the registration form out by paper and mail the form and check to me is still an option if you prefer that route. Whatever works best for you.
If you are already registered and paid, please still reach out to me (kensinginn@tds.net) directly with your completed log when you are finished – no need to use the new site to note your completion.

Note, there are hiking programs for many of the chapters in the Alliance and they are mostly (maybe all) online now and have similar capability. Just go to https://www.iceagetrail.org/explore/plan-hike/hiking-awards-programs/ and get started today!

Ice Age Trail Alliance
2110 Main Street
Cross Plains, WI 53528

Dane County Chapter
dane.iceagetrail.org

Hike-A-Thon: October 14, 2023!

By Chris and EJ Temme

We already see leaves changing color here in Dane County, a sure sign of Fall, if not a bit early due to the dry weather. And the Fall season means it is time for another Hike-a-Thon! We have again scheduled the 2023 Hike-a-Thon in October to coincide with the Ice Age Trail's Mammoth Challenge for the chance to earn your Mammoth Challenge badge while enjoying some of Dane County's best trails and contributing to the Dane County Land fund to build more beautiful trail! The Dane County Chapter's Hike-a-Thon will take place on October 14 and include options to hike 5 or 16 miles on the Montrose to Verona segments. Join us for a fun adventure through some of Dane County's most scenic trails and enjoy the companionship of everyone who makes the Ice Age National Scenic Trail a special place to behold. We will have refreshments at locations throughout the hike to enhance your trek and pursuit of your 2023 Mammoth Challenge badge.

Scan the QR code for hike details and to register for the hike. For more information, contact Tom Gross at 144tag@gmail.com

Photo credit: Dave Lonsdorf