

LANGLADE COUNTY ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL CONDITIONS

(As of May 3, 2021)

COVID-19

All five Ice Age Trail segments in the county are open for hiking. However, hikers are encouraged to keep an appropriate distance when encountering other hikers on the trail. Also having a facemask handy if close encounters with others is recommended.

Due to situations beyond the control of the Langlade County Ice Age Trail Chapter, conditions are constantly changing. Hikers are urged to contact the chapter coordinator (715-623-2645) or the Langlade County Forestry Department Office (715-627-6300) at the Fairgrounds to check on current conditions in advance of any hike.

"You Are Here" signs, installed in 1997, are at select sites or where the trail crosses public roads on the Kettlebowl, Lumbercamp and Parrish Hills Segments.



Frost pocket on the Kettlebowl Segment

KETTLEBOWL – Distance: Approximately 13 miles Highway 52 to Polar at Highway 64.

Over half of this segment crosses privately-owned land. The mile plus stretch of trail north of the Sherry/Oak Roads Trailhead is privately owned so good trail ethics is especially appreciated. A logging operation was completed in 2019 in the mid-section of the segment. The affected stretch is covered by a six-mile state conservation and trail easement on land owned by the BTG Pactual Group and managed by Steigerwaldt Land Services of Tomahawk. No future logging operations in the area are known at this time.

Brushing and markings were refreshed where needed from Sherry/Oak Roads north to the Kettlebowl Ski Hill at Highway 52 this year. Seasonal growth of trees screen markings so be alert. Drainage of a large pool of water on the trail was completed last year by volunteers.

Activity to extend the south end of the segment a mile southeast via the Sherry rail grade is being planned. It would make the segment's Sherry Road trailhead closer to the county's ATV lot for safe and lawful off-road vehicle parking. The move is being made to alleviate the unlawful and unsafe parking occurring at the existing trailhead on Sherry/Oak Roads. Parking on rural roads is prohibited by county and state traffic safety codes. Sheriff deputies are authorized and will issue citations or impound vehicles parked on rural roads in the county in which they consider pose a traffic safety hazard.

The segment passes through some of the highest terrain in Langlade County and features scenic hardwood ridges and frost pockets. Near to the trail is Kent Hill at 1903 feet above sea level which is the county's highest point of elevation. Big Stone Hole, a unique glacial feature, is just off the trail but access is unimproved, so caution is advised.



Boulder field on South Slope of Summit Lake Moraine east of Baker Lake - Photo by Lee Auner

LUMBERCAMP - Distance: 12 miles Wisconsin 52 to County Trunk A

Future logging will affect a half mile of the segment just west of Baker Lake (see following map) Because a portion of the steep, boulder strewn trail section will be logged, including eight acres of clear cut, the chapter is considering closing this stretch until the operation is completed and volunteers can safely re-establish the trail. The trail may be accessible at Otto Mauk Road between County S but logging traffic may use the public road for access between the operation and WI 52. More information on the situation will be posted as it become available to the chapter.

The stretch especially west of Otto Mauk Road to County Trunk S has an inordinate amount of use by 4-wheel vehicles. With the abnormal rain this summer, pools of water have collected in depressions formed by the vehicular traffic. Caution is advised in these areas.

Brushing and directional arrows at critical intersections and markings were refreshed this year from Wisconsin Highway 52 west to County A. Access to parking at the north end of Hill Road is not available currently as a deep pool of water covers the entire width of the town road and beyond. High water levels have caused an overflow of the shallow glacial lakes in the Peters Marsh Wildlife Area affecting the trail between County Highways S and A.

Local sportsmen have fixed up the stone cellar at the former Norem Lumbercamp site just west of Otto Mauk Road for overnight use. Although the chapter is not responsible for the accommodations, hikers are encouraged to exercise good trail stewardship if using the historic structure.

The boulder strewn slopes near Baker Lake, a former logging camp and the state's Peters Marsh Wildlife Area are noted features of this segment. The east end of the segment has rugged terrain which is part of a recessive moraine known as the Summit Lake Moraine which stretches from Oneida County through Langlade County into Oconto County.



Spychalla Lodge-Summit Moraine Segment at County Trunk J.

Summit Moraine - Distance: 12.4 miles County Trunk A to County Trunk B

Rerouting of this segment was completed in 2018. The reroute involved establishment of new trail sections and upgrading existing stretches. The segment utilizes a part of the popular Jack Lake Cross Country Ski system. Winter hikers are encouraged to avoid disturbing the groomed track maintained for skiers.

The entire segment was checked this spring and some upgrading of signage, including new locator signs and blazes are planned.

Caution should be exercised on the trail section along the busy and high-speed County A. Parking of vehicles at any gated areas on County A is prohibited by county ordinance and the DNR.

Hikers are encouraged to use parking areas on County B, Veterans Memorial Park or the Jack Lake Cross Country Ski on County J to avoid the volume of highspeed traffic on US 45/WI 47. There is no safe off-road parking space along this busy highway.

Depending on varying lake levels, the bog walk at Game Lake may have flooded sections but hikers can follow the longer portion of the nature trail around the lake as a bypass to connect east or west with the Ice Age Trail.

Features of this segment are Veterans Memorial Park, the bog walk, and Spychalla Lodge. The latter facility is open but overnight use is discouraged. There are two campsites along the segment on Game and Jack Lakes along with the no-fee designated camp area (DCA) at Upper Venter Lake. Ice Age Trail Alliance rules prohibit campfire at DCAs along the trail so observance of the rule is appreciated by other hikers and local volunteers.

Veterans Memorial Park is a county park with cabins, developed campground, picnic area, a beach and arboretum. Some hikers have used the county park as a base camp for their treks.



Crossing the West Branch of the Eau Claire River. A babbling brook or raging torrent?

HIGHLAND LAKES - Distance: 12.5 miles County Trunk B to County Trunk T.

In 2009, the Knights Templar Club granted permission for the trail to cross their land on a forest lane north of Kleevers Road. Gates and trail markings were installed on the stretch the following year. Brushing, refresher markings and directional arrows at critical intersections were completed this spring.

This segment is incomplete and requires a hike on Forest and Kleevers Roads in the Town of Upham for approximately 4.5 miles to complete a trip from the eastern trailhead at County Trunk Highway B.

An interesting feature on Forest Road is the Bogus Swamp Natural Area. Watch for the state marker about the unique site on the east side of the road. The marker is less than a mile north of the Bogus Road junction with Forest Road.

An outstanding feature of this segment is the Parrish terminal moraine which closely parallels the stretch north of Kleevers Road for over 3 miles. Just north of 5 Points, is a gap cut by the West Branch of the Eau Claire River through the terminal moraine by vast volumes of water from the melting glacier. The gap was shaped later for a railroad grade. Just west of 5 Points is the west branch requiring a ford or a bit of creativity, depending on water levels, to avoid wet feet.



Just east of Nelson Fire Lane, a vista from "Blackberry Ridge". Photo by John Prokops

PARRISH HILLS - Distance: 12 miles County Trunk T to the Lincoln County Line

A tornado in 2011 devastated a portion of the segment south of 5 Cent Road. A re-route via ATV/UTV trails on the Parrish Game Trail Fire Lane and 5 Cent Road is provided until the damaged stretch is re-established. Activity to locate the trail from the ATV trail is underway. Depending on ground water levels, the segment has several water crossings which will require a bit of creativity to get around them.

Beaver activity created a water crossing challenge in the area between 5 Cent Road and the forest lane north of the ATV shelter. Beaver activity continues to offer wet stretches in the Old Truck Marker area 2.5 miles north of the trail head on County T

A few downfall trees were reported at scattered locations and awaiting removal by the chapter's certified sawyers. Brushing and trail markings were checked this spring.

Hikers may encounter a No Trespassing sign on the rail grade just west of Pine Road in Parrish. However, the landowner has granted permission for hikers to pass over his property.

The segment has a ford across the Prairie River southeast of Parrish. The river bottom is firm and the water level is usually below the knees. Mucky stretches just north and south of the river can be expected. This winter the river froze to allow dry crossings but six days later the stream was flowing.

Logging was partially completed on the stretch between the Nelson and Parrish Game Trail Fire Lanes and the state-owned property south of the Prairie River. Logging will be occurring in areas near the trail so hauling traffic may be encountered. Caution is advised in these areas when any logging operation is active.

The rebuilding of the ATV shelter just north of Five Cent Road was completed. The facility a half mile south of the trail crossing is available to hikers. Camping in proximity to the shelter is not permitted.

Northwoods Chapter members regularly check the stretch from County Trunk H west into Lincoln County.

Features of the Parrish Hills Segment include the Old Truck Marker, natural lakes, wetlands, "Blackberry Ridge" and the Prairie River ford. Another notable feature is Baldy Hill, the eastern prominence of the Harrison Hills moraine deposited by the Wisconsin Valley Lobe of the last glacier just 11,000 years ago.