

Thousand-Miler Essay
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After contemplating the IAT for a couple of years, I set a goal to do the whole trail in 2021 as a section hiker. It became a semi-obsessive pursuit and I finished the trail with 2.5 months to spare. There were numerous highlights to this adventure including the Lincoln and Langlade Counties segments/communities, Dells of Eau Claire, the western terminus, birch trees in general, fall mushrooms, seeing kames, and Mondeaux Esker. The biggest highlight though was being lucky enough to have fabulous friends join me. The trail became a way to connect during an otherwise isolating time due to the pandemic. Some of those friends are now checking sections off too and I look forward to helping them fill their maps in. Personally, the trail became more than just the miles. It was a much needed mental reset. Most issues seem to mellow with enough trail time; some just need a few more miles than others. I would encourage everyone to find those spaces that make them happy and take the time to be there. For me, that's the outdoors. I'm so, so thankful that public lands are a thing people have advocated for and that this trail exists as a way to access them. I'm also really grateful for the private landowners that have allowed hikers on their property and the small army of volunteers who continue to make this trail possible. I look forward to joining as a trail volunteer at upcoming events.