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Hiker Safety Concerns Alleviated at Gibraltar Rock State Natural Area
Volunteer-Built Loop Trail Keeps People Off Busy Highway V

Cross Plains, Wis. (Dec. 4, 2023) – A three-quarter-of-a-mile loop trail at the Gibraltar Rock State Natural Area is now open for hikers.

Built by volunteers from the Ice Age Trail Alliance, the trail connects two parking lots used by hikers to access the Gibraltar Rock bluff via the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The lots are located in the town of West Point on Hwy. V and Gibraltar Rock Rd.

“Gibraltar Rock is one of the most scenic spots on the Ice Age Trail,” says Amy Onofrey, Chapter Coordinator for the Lodi Valley Chapter of the Ice Age Trail Alliance. “Combine the amazing views you get from the top of the bluff with the fact that this portion of the Trail is less than two miles, and the result is that Gibraltar Rock is also one of the most popular spots on the Trail.” In fact, it’s not uncommon for both parking lots to fill up with cars on a weekend.

Until recently, hikers had two choices to get back to their car after hiking the portion of Trail that runs through the Gibraltar Rock State Natural Area: hike an out and back (repeating the Trail) or hike the Trail one direction, then along Highway V.

“Walking along Highway V. was always a bit dicey. The shoulder is narrow. The sightlines aren’t great. Plus, it’s a backroad highway, which people tend to drive fast on,” says Onofrey. “This has been an area of concern for a while.”

Adding a loop trail to the State Natural Area has been a goal for the Alliance for a number of years. “Once we received all permissions needed, the Chapter acted fast to make it reality,” says Onofrey. In total, volunteers contributed 400 hours over about two weeks to create the new trail.

“A lot of thought was put into this loop. It’s quite lovely as it winds along.” says Onofrey.

To defray some construction costs, the Alliance received a \$2,500 Parks and Recreation Management Enhancement Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The new trail, which veers off the official yellow-blazed Ice Age Trail, is marked with white blazes, which indicate to hikers that it’s a loop that will connect to the Ice Age Trail route. The loop trail does not add mileage to the overall length of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, rather enhances the hiker experience.

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About the Ice Age National Scenic Trail:

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a 1,200-mile footpath contained entirely within Wisconsin. It traverses the state from St. Croix Falls in the west, to Sturgeon Bay in the east, going as far south as Janesville. One of 11 National Scenic Trails, the Ice Age Trail highlights the landscapes that were carved out by ancient glaciers, which happen to be some of the most beautiful areas in the state. Approximately 60% of Wisconsin residents live within 20 miles of the Ice Age Trail.

About the Ice Age Trail Alliance:

The Ice Age Trail Alliance is a non-profit, member and volunteer-based organization which conserves, creates, maintains, and promotes the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. It consists of 19 volunteer chapters, spread across the length of the Trail. Each volunteer chapter is responsible for creating, maintaining, and promoting the Trail in their area. The Lodi Valley Chapter of the Alliance maintains the Ice Age Trail in southern Columbia County from the Lodi Marsh to the Merrimac Ferry. For more information visit **IceAgeTrail.org**.