

Terry Driscoll IAT Essay

Started: 5/25/2013

Finished: 10/17/2023

Hiked Eastern Bifurcation and the Baraboo Segment

Back in 2011 I completed my first marathon and was looking for another goal. In 2011 and 2012 I started watching YouTube videos and movies about long distance hiking. I was seeing people hiking the Appalachian Trail, PCT Trail, and the John Muir Trail. I thought how am I going to be able to hike a long distance trail while still working full time. Then I came across the Ice Age Trail and thought this was perfect. I have a long-distance trail right in my state. In 2013, I purchased the 2011 companion guidebook along with the colored maps. I started researching and planning how I was going to section hike the trail. Later I purchased the 2014 Guidebook and then the E-Version Atlas & Databook (2017 - 2019). In 2012, I started using the FarOut App. I also used the online interactive trail map from the IAT website along with Google maps.

On May 25, 2013, I started hiking the Sturgeon Bay Segment. My wife and son dropped me off and picked me up later. This allowed us as a family to discover Wisconsin together. My other method would be biking to the opposite end of the trail and walking back to the car because I really didn't want to walk out and back. Living in the Appleton area allowed me to solo section hike easily on weekends being that I'm centrally located between the eastern and central part of the trail. I decided not to hike in one direction because I wanted to hike the segments first and do the connector routes later. In the beginning, I would dread hiking the connector routes but by the end of my journey I learned to appreciate them. It was amazing to see the contour of the land, the vastness of the landscape, and the site and sounds of harvest time. Walking the connector routes could be hard during the hot and humid summer month when you were fully exposed to the sun but in the fall and spring it was enjoyable.

By 2023, my wife and I were both retired and I had around 400 miles left starting from the Lumber Camp Segment going West. By this time, my wife wanted to hike the trail also, but just all the segments. So, we travelled with two cars and positioned them on either end of the segments. It was great to be able to share all those moments on and off the trail with my wife. On October 17, 2023, I finished the trail on the St. Croix Falls Segment.

I kept track of my miles by noting them on the blue summary pages in the 2011 companion guidebook until I found the downloadable Excel sheets on the IAT webpage. In conjunction with noting my miles I used my Garmin etrex 20 to record my hikes and uploaded them into the BaseCamp software, when I didn't forget the etrex in the car or ran out of batteries. I learned my lesson quickly, how frustrating.

I enjoyed section hiking. This allowed me and my family to revisit those communities and counties multiple times and enjoy what they each had to offer for places to camp, eat and play. This gave me the chance to experience hiking during all four seasons.

Some of the animals that we came across were bears, grouse, turtles nesting along a gravel road, bald eagles, wild turkeys, pheasants, dogs, cats, cows, deer, horses, red tail hawks, swans, and snakes.

Some of my favorite segments in the northern region are Jerry Lake, Lake Eleven, Chippewa Moraine, Gassy Lake, and McKenzie Creek because of the remoteness and all the water. I enjoyed the Northern Kettle Moraine, Holy Hill, Lapham Peak, and the Southern Kettle Moraine segments of the eastern

region. Some of my favorite segments in the central region are Devil's Lake, Merrimac, Mekan River, Hartman Creek, Ringle, and Dells of the Eau Claire.

Hiking the IAT trail never really ends because my wife would like to hike all the segments, so I get to go back and enjoy them again and, in the future, we will watch out for new segments being built and hike those as well.

Outside of hiking the trail:

During the time of hiking the trail my son was in Scouts and I thought what a great opportunity for the scouts and leaders to volunteer their time to help with a trail build and maintenance. So, we gathered some scouts to help on the Hartman Creek Segment and I think it was the Merrimac Segment. It was great for the scouts. They were able to camp, work with trail tools, and take ownership of the section(s) of the trail that they work on.

We also put together an overnight backpacking trip on the Greenbush Segment for the scouts and parents instead of our regular car camping.