

Ice Age Trail Alliance Position Statement: Painted Rocks and Other Trinkets on the Trail

Approved by Alliance Leadership Team 9/13/2022

Painted rocks left along the Ice Age National Scenic Trail cause a lot of discussion among Trail users. People either love them for the joy they bring, their element of surprise, because they're a creative outlet, or as way to keep kids engaged; Or, they dislike them because they are unnatural, disruptive to a user's experience, potentially harmful to the environment, or are considered to be litter.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance understands both sides. Yet, its official position is painted rocks and other trinkets (e.g. ribbons, quilted hearts, fairy gardens, gnomes, artwork, etc.) do not belong on, or in the vicinity of, the Ice Age Trail. There are three reasons for this:

- 1) The Ice Age Trail is a National and State *Scenic* Trail. By definition, a scenic trail is a route of outstanding recreation opportunity, which showcases the country's spectacular national resources and beauty. In the case of the Ice Age Trail, it also passes across land of great geological significance. Trinkets left along the Trail are unnatural and therefore detract from the Trail's natural beauty and the user's experience.
- 2) Ice Age Trail users are encouraged to practice the principles of Leave No Trace, of which the fourth and seventh principles apply to trinkets. "Leave What You Find," the fourth principle, includes minimizing site alterations, and leaving areas as you found them. Trinkets left along the trail directly oppose this principle.

The seventh principle, "Be Considerate of Others", states that one of the most important components of outdoor ethics is to maintain courtesy toward other visitors. It lists damaged surroundings as something that takes away the natural appear of the outdoors. By leaving trinkets, people damage the surroundings.

- 3) Trinkets left on the Trail could lead to trespassing issues and loss of Trail rights on certain property. As the Trail makes it 1,200 miles across the state, it passes through a wide variety of landownership types; certain landowners could consider trinkets litter.

Perceived Exceptions May Exist

Since the Trail passes through many types of landownership, there may be times when the landowner chooses to place trinkets along the Trail. In addition, there may be times when the Trail passes close to privately-owned land where trinkets have been placed. In either situation, it is the landowner's prerogative to do so. The Alliance recognizes this may lead to perceived exceptions to this stated position. However, a landowner's rights supersede the Alliance's position.