

WOLF RIVER STATE TRAIL WALRICH ROAD TO LILY MITIGATION AND MULTI-USE UPGRADE PROPOSAL 2024

PURPOSE:

The south eastern side of Langlade County has limited access to summer and fall statewide motorized trail systems resulting from limitations created by the Wolf River, Federal Forest Lands and conservation easement lands west of the Wolf River and east of Highway 55 along 9 Mile Creek.

This proposed trail upgrade includes ten miles of the Wolf River State Trail that is currently year-round non-motorized/ winter snowmobile trail. The segment of trail extends from Walrich Road between the Village of White Lake and Highway 55 in the community of Lily. Overall this segment of the Wolf River State trail connects the communities of White Lake and Langlade, then north to the community of Lily. Continuing north from Lily the Wolf River State Trail is year-round motorized and open for all uses. North of Lily the trail continues north to trail systems in Forest County and Vilas County. Also north of Lily, the Wolf River State trail provides trails connecting east and west to the counties of Oconto, Marinette, Oneida and Florence and the State of Michigan.

The Wolf River is a national Wild and Scenic River. This trail is located in a scenic area and weaves along and through the Wolf River Fisheries area managed by the Wisconsin DNR. The Wolf River Fisheries property has limitations on motorized uses established from use of Federal grant monies for purchase of the fisheries property by the State of Wisconsin. The crossing of the Wolf River by the Wolf River State trail provides and overlook of a large river gorge. This site is among the best views in Langlade County especially during fall colors.

HISTORY:

The Wolf River State Trail was an acquisition separate from the Wolf River Fisheries Area. The trail was acquired by the Wisconsin DNR from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation under the rails to trails program following abandonment of the former railroad. The purpose of this program is

development of recreational trails with preservation of rights for redevelopment of railroad use if that use is ever again feasible.

CONCERNS:

This trail has had many issues over the past years including concerns from groups and individuals related to the Wolf River Fisheries area which intermingles with the Wolf River State Trail property. Concerns include the following:

- Potential impacts to habitat for turtles that are listed by the State of Wisconsin as a Rare and Threatened species
- Potential impacts to habitat for turtles that are listed by the State of Wisconsin listing as a Species of Special Concern
- Motorize use speeds which may endanger turtles crossing the trail.
- Potential impacts of dust intrusion into the Wolf River resulting in degradation of Trout habitat
- Motorize use speeds which may endanger non-motorized users of the trail

These concerns have blocked conversion of the trail to multi-use, restricting summer motorized use to only those qualified for power drive mobility device permits. Annually between 25 and 70 PDMD permits are issued for people allowing them access to the trail and the river. The restrictions have negatively impacted the communities of Langlade, White Lake and Lily by excluding them from good access to the statewide motorized trail system. The restrictions have also negatively impacted the remainder of Langlade County by limiting access to statewide trail systems to the east and south resulting from the Wolf River, National Forest Lands and the Menominee Reservation.

SOIL CONDITIONS:

Soils in this area are heavily impacted by the former railroad grade that predated the trail system. This section of trail is predominantly flat terrain created by the former railroad with a well-established trail bed which has deteriorated due to lack of trail maintenance funding for the limited non-motorized users.

MITIGATION AND UPGRADE PROPOSAL:

Under this proposal, the entire ten-mile stretch of the Wolf River State Trail between Walrich Road and Lily will be rehabilitated to improve conditions for all users, including addition of summer and fall motorized use. The project will

provide mitigation practices to address potential turtle habitat, potential dust intrusion into the Wolf River and potential dangers to non-motorized users and turtles crossing the trail.

This project will initially focus on improving drainage to create a dry trail surface by ditching, lifting the trail where needed and stabilizing the trail surface with breaker run or gravel where historic soils are insufficient to support traffic. The WCFA ATV/UTV Sustainable Trail Guidance will be followed in order to create a sustainable and maintainable trail that will meet Wisconsin Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality.

Under turtle habitat guidance documents (see attached), turtle habitat impacts may be mitigated by installation of turtle exclusion fencing at areas which are within 100 feet of rivers which provide turtle habitat. This project will install approximately 10,250 feet of turtle exclusion fencing including turn around ends along trail segments which are within 100 feet of the Wolf River or within 100 feet of feeder streams which flow to the Wolf River. In addition to turtle exclusion fencing, turtles will further be protected by installation of speed limiting gates and posting of 15 mile per hour speed limits in areas within 100 feet of the Wolf River or any crossing feeder streams.

Areas within 100 feet of the Wolf River, including approximately 11,500 feet of trail, will be improved by placement of 6" of compacted asphalt millings to reduce potential dust intrusion from motorized use. This improvement will also reduce potential use of these trail tread segments by turtles for nesting sites.

The trail to be rehabilitated crosses Langlade County Forest lies entirely on the Wolf River State Trail and after modification of the Wolf River State Trail master plan will be managed by the Langlade County Forestry, Parks and Recreation Department with cooperation of the White Lake ATV Club.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION:

This project proposes to:

1. Install approximately 10,250 feet turtle exclusion fencing in areas that are within 100 feet of rivers along or crossing the trail.
2. Repair and crown the surface of the trail using native materials where possible- approximately 10 miles

3. Improve drainage on the trail utilizing diversion ditches and proper crowing where appropriate- approximately 10 miles
4. Where historic soil conditions require, utilize a combination of breaker run and gravel to lift and stabilize the trail surface- approximately 3 miles
5. Stabilize trail and provide dust control utilizing recycled asphalt in areas within 100 feet of rivers crossing or along the trail- approximately 2.2 miles
6. Install speed/width limiting gates and post 15 MPH signage to reduce potential motorized speeds in areas of turtle activity or higher non-motorized use- 20 gates and 40 signs.

Work will be accomplished through use of an excavator and bulldozer to reshape the surface, expand and ditch the trail. In areas of where there is not sufficient material available or the soils are not suitable for use, the trail breaker run or gravel will be hauled in where needed.

The attached maps show locations where turtle exclusion fencing, speed/width limiting gates, ATV/UTV bypass gates, native materials, breaker run, gravel or recycled asphalt will be used.

The area identified as “crushed gravel” will have approximately 1/3 for the length graveled, focusing on lower areas within this stretch. The remaining 2/3 will have native materials used. Where gravel or breaker run is to be used the approximate depth will be 6 inches in order to facilitate maintenance activities in the future. Where recycled asphalt will be used, the approximate depth will be 6” compacted to provide a stable surface and reduce dust.

All proposed work will follow requirements for Federal and State permits and approvals as needed. Work will follow guidance provide by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Bureau of Heritage Resources.

PROJECT BUDGET ESTIMATE

Install approximately 10,250 feet turtle exclusion fencing in areas that are within 100 feet of rivers along or crossing the trail. Materials: \$117,273 Labor- salary & fringe \$8,800- **Total \$126,073**

Repair and crown the surface of the trail using native materials where possible- approximately 10 miles. Improve drainage on the trail utilizing diversion ditches and proper crowing where appropriate. - approximately 10 miles

Labor & Materials: **\$4,500/mile X 10 Miles= \$45,000**

Where historic soil conditions require, utilize a combination of breaker run and gravel to lift and stabilize the trail surface- approximately 3 miles

Labor & Materials: **\$6,000/mile X 3 Miles= \$18,000**

Stabilize trail and provide dust control utilizing 4" recycled asphalt in areas within 100 feet of rivers crossing or along the trail- approximately 2.2 miles

Highway Department Quotation: \$93,572.52

Install speed/with limiting gates and post 15 MPH signage to reduce potential motorized speeds in areas of turtle activity or higher non-motorized use- 20 gates and 40 signs.

Gates Materials: 20 gates X **\$600 per gate= \$12,000**

Sign Materials: 40 signs and post X **40 signs= \$1,600**

Gate and Sign Labor- salary & Fringe= **\$8,800**

Silt Fencing – 32,000 feet

320 rolls @ \$29.00 per roll- \$9,280

Installation- \$12,800

Total Budget Estimate: \$327,125.52