



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Ice Age National Scenic Trail
8075 Old Sauk Pass Road
Cross Plains, Wisconsin 53528

February 28, 2023

Polk County Environmental Services Division
Attn: Bob Kazmierski, Director of Environmental Services
100 Polk County Plaza, Suite 120
Balsam Lake, WI 54810
Email: Robert.kazmierski@polkcountywi.gov

RE: Meeting February 8, Multiple use on the Gandy Dancer State Scenic Trail

Dear Bob,

In response to the meeting that was hosted on February 8, 2023, the National Park Service-Ice Age National Scenic Trail (NST) would like to indicate its preference for the Ice Age NST that is co-located on the Gandy Dancer to remain a footpath only. The NPS understands that the purpose of this planning process is to analyze types of public uses and assess resource management; however, the Ice Age NST as authorized by an amendment to the National Trails System Act of 1968 indicates, "The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited...". The only exception is for administrative access or egress and for snowmobile use in limited areas and under certain criteria. The trail traverses public and private land and is managed through a strong partnership between the NPS, WDNR, and Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA), also referred to as the Triad.

It is acknowledged in the Polk County Countywide Comprehensive Trail Network Plan Project that, "The Ice Age Trail is intended to be a premier non-motorized trail, and allows hiking, cross-country skiing, and snow shoeing," indicating the County was aware the trail does not allow for motorized use. Furthermore, the plan indicates, "A section of the Gandy Dancer also shares the Ice Age Trail route from St. Croix Falls to the Village of Frederic."

It is the preference of the NPS that the footpath created and maintained for users of the Ice Age NST not be utilized by horses. As indicated in the Ice Age National and State Scenic Trail Vision Statement and Attributes of 2002, agreed to by all members of the Triad (IATA, NPS, and WDNR), "While such trails may allow uses other than hiking, their connections to the Ice Age Trail must be designed to prevent access of other uses onto the Ice Age Trail."

The Ice Age NST is one of only eleven National Scenic Trails in the country and one of 42 designated Wisconsin State Trails. The Ice Age NST is the only state trail designated as a State Scenic Trail. Approximately 700 miles of the Ice Age NST has been constructed and is open for public use. Of those 700 miles, 15.5 miles currently exist on the Gandy Dancer State Scenic Trail and those miles have been considered both State Scenic Trail and National Scenic Trail since the mid-1990s. The Ice Age NST is co-located with the Gandy Dancer among nine other State Trails. According to a study conducted by the University of Whitewater in 2019, the Ice Age NST is enjoyed by over 2.3 million people each year for hiking, backpacking, camping, skiing, snowshoeing, and other outdoor recreational activities.



The NPS appreciates your consideration of these comments and would ask that the NPS be consulted anytime prospective projects overlap with the Ice Age NST. If there are any additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Eric Gabriel, Superintendent
Ice Age National Scenic Trail