

AITKIN COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION TRAIL PLAN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: Why is Aitkin County developing a Comprehensive Recreation Trail Plan?

A: The County is developing a comprehensive recreation trail plan to help ensure that abundant recreation opportunities can continue to be offered in Aitkin County while addressing increasing demands, responding to emerging trail-based recreation interests and while protecting natural resources, wildlife, forests and soils. The County wants to protect the recreation trails that exist, add new trails where conditions are suitable and continue to balance recreation demands with the other benefits that county-managed lands provide.



Q: What lands will the plan address?

A: The comprehensive recreation trail plan will address recreation trails on county-managed lands in Aitkin County.

Q: What types of recreation trails will be included in the plan?

A: The plan will include a wide range of trail-based recreation that can be supported by county-managed lands, including snowmobile, ATV, off-highway motorcycles (OHM), horse (equestrian), hiking, hunter walking, cross-country skiing and mountain biking trails. The plan will also address geo-caching opportunities on county-managed lands and opportunities for water trails, including access points and campsites along the Mississippi River.

Q: Are paved bike trails included within the plan?

A: No, the county-managed lands are mainly forested lands and paved trails are not compatible with the other lands uses, including forest and wildlife management. The comprehensive recreation trail plan for Aitkin County will not include the development of paved bike trails. There are possibilities for paved bike trails within cities and towns, but the planning and/or development of these opportunities will not be addressed in the county-lands plan.

Q: Will all types of recreation be allowed on all of the trails?

A: No, trails will be designated for specific uses that are compatible with the trail conditions. Some uses, such as snowmobiling and horse riding may be allowed on the same trail, but during different seasons. Trail uses and seasons will be designated and enforced to help reduce the possibility of user conflicts and to protect trail user safety. Signs will be posted and maps updated to identify allowable trail uses and seasons of use. Future trail development will also be

guided by an analysis of soils, wildlife, and other environmental conditions. This analysis will be included in the plan and will identify areas of county-managed land that are suitable for current or future recreation trail development and specific recreation uses.

Q: Will trails that we use now be closed?

A: The plan does not currently include closing any trails; however, if trail or natural resource damage occurs due to illegal trail use or heavy use patterns, trails may be closed or uses may be limited. The county is committed to providing trails that support enjoyable recreation while protecting natural resources and wildlife habitats. It is important that trail users obey trail regulations, report abuse or trail damage, and participate in or support clubs and educational services that promote trail user ethics and collaboration in trail repair and maintenance.

Q: Will the plan include details about new trails to be developed in the county?

A: The plan will include guidance for new trail development, including identifying areas of county-managed lands that are suitable (or not suitable) for specific types of uses and guidelines for trail design. The plan will be used to help evaluate proposals for new trails on county-managed lands.

Q: How long will the plan last?

A: The plan will take a ten year view on recreation trails on county-managed lands and may be updated as new information becomes available.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: Information about the comprehensive recreation trail plan is available from the Aitkin County Land Department and there is a link to the project website at the County's webpage. Public meetings were held in August 2009 regarding the plan and an additional public meeting will be held before the plan is finalized. A notice of the public meeting will be posted at the project website and in local newspapers. Details will also be available from the Aitkin County Land Department.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.co.aitkin.mn.us/Departments/Land/recreation.html>

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