

70-Mile Trail Project

Stakeholder Consultation – Summary of Public Comments

1/17/08

Approved by the Oversight Committee 29 January 2008

Overview

This document summarizes the stakeholder consultation process and the comments received.

Stakeholder Consultation Process

Project input has been requested from a range of interested parties and through a variety of communication methods. The project coordinator has utilized a number of contact lists, including a local media list (15 recipients), regional and national media lists (849 recipients), a national stakeholder list (159 recipients) and a list of interested parties (128 recipients as of 1/17/08).

There have been news releases about the project (11/1/07, 12/4/07), and articles about the project have been included in the NewsHopper, Grand Rapids Herald-Review, Aitkin Independent Age, Duluth News Tribune, Brainerd Dispatch, and McGregor Voyageur Press.

The national stakeholder list for the project was compiled with input from forest certification auditors and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Individuals can request to be added to the “interested parties” list by attending and signing-in at a committee meeting (or other public meeting) or by contacting the project coordinator. The invitation and instructions to sign-up for the list through email are posted at the project website. Stakeholders have also been able to provide input to the project through in-person public meetings, including committee meetings which are open to the public and include time on the agenda for public comment, as well as events such as the kick-off meetings for the project that were held on November 27th and 28th, 2007 and which more than 150 people participated in. Interested parties are also invited to contact the project coordinator with comments. Comment forms have been provided at meetings and at the website. As the project proceeds, additional opportunities for stakeholder input will include continued email communications, public meetings, and notifications mailed to interested parties as part of the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) process.

More than 150 people have provided input to the project by attending a meeting, submitting written comments, or contacting the project coordinator.

For more information, contact the project coordinator, Kathryn Fernholz at 612-333-0430, katie@dovetailinc.org, or Dovetail Partners, 528 Hennepin Ave, Suite 202, Minneapolis, MN 55403.

Stakeholder Comments

The following table (Table 1.) summarizes the general project comments that have been received and responses prepared by the Oversight Committee.

Table 1. Summary of General Project Comments

<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
Concern about trail route near Warba	Project map is posted at the project website and available at public meetings.
Concern about trail route near Jacobson; Opposed to any trail that lies east of Hwy 65 in the Jacobson area	The proposed trail route does not lie east of Hwy 65 in the Jacobson area.
Desire to have trail in McGregor/Big-Sandy Area	The committee is considering trail routes in the McGregor/Big-Sandy Area.
Excited to see trail project and interested in having friends up to go riding	Duly noted.
Concern about residents, property owners, business owners from the area who have a stake in the outcome having an opportunity to give their opinion	The project includes opportunities for public input and there is a project oversight committee composed of a range of interests from the project area.
ATV traffic is really bad on township road near Lawler (365 th Lane)	Alternative routes have been proposed to address this concern.
The trail will be useful for people in the area, especially the ATV clubs who get together and take trips to see the scenery	Duly noted.
Need parking for Solana Loop	The project includes identification of parking and loading areas.
Need to map destinations along the route including a gas station and café in McGrath	The project includes identification of destinations along the route.
Want to be able to run Class II ATVs on the trail	The committee is considering the allowable trail uses.
ATVs aren't like snowmobiles that go place to place to get warm. It is a family sport; bar to bar routes do not fit as well.	Duly noted.
Interested in having ATVs on the Soo Line	The use of the Soo Line Trail is an Aitkin County Board decision.
Need more trails to keep the honest people honest	Duly noted.
Committee needs to be aware of the large percentage of riders that are not currently behaving well and expect the worse.	A trail maintenance, monitoring and enforcement plan will be developed and rider education efforts will continue.
Education will help with areas of misuse. Work to educate parents not just the kids because the parents don't know the rules. Biggest problem is the lack of education.	The project partners and the MN DNR continue education efforts related to motorized recreation.
Interested in having the trail open to snowmobiles	The committee is considering the allowable trail uses.

Interested in seeing the trail maps	A project map is posted at the project website and available at public meetings
Concern that the oversight committee doesn't include adequate environmental interest representation	The committee members represent a range of interests and have all made a commitment to supporting the project goal of designing an environmentally sensitive trail. Additional stakeholders can provide input to the project through public meetings and the EAW review and comment process.
Concern about scenic river status and impacts to the Mississippi River	The analysis of environmental impacts will include a review of riparian, wetland, and shoreline impacts and the applicable regulations and guidelines.
Concern about Important Birding Areas (IBAs) in project area	The analysis of environmental impacts will include data related to known birding areas and other important wildlife uses and areas.
The region has a wealth of flora and fauna and the trail should include places for riders to get off and use their feet and open their eyes and ears.	The committee is considering opportunities to enhance the project and provide related trail amenities.
Need to have a few wet and muddy spots for those who like that sort of thing or they will make it themselves	The project is committed to an environmentally sensitive trail design and will not develop trail segments that encourage unlawful practices. The project also includes the development of a monitoring and enforcement plan that will result in trail closures if harmful use is occurring.
The project should feature innovations in trail design and test new concepts including erosion prevention ideas.	The committee is considering opportunities to test trail design and construction innovations. Additional project funding will likely be sought to support these efforts.
ATVs are already causing major problems. They are operating illegally (underage, reckless, noisy, riding on roads, and frequently in wetlands) and it is getting worse.	The project intends to reduce the negative impacts that are occurring and prevent their further escalation by providing a destination trail for users and by increasing enforcement and monitoring.
Need to reduce noise, dust, and safety impacts from township road traffic	The project includes the development of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) to identify, minimize and mitigate negative impacts associated with the trail.
The project should take a phased approach, build in caution, and consider adaptive management options.	Duly noted.

Our club of 80+ families supports the trail links to increase the long-distance riding and overnight stay opportunities.	The project proposes to provide nearly 500 miles of continuous trails to support this type of riding experience.
Concern about developing the trail as a destination for riders from within and outside the state and region. Concern about potential for significant impacts in project area and other parts of Minnesota.	The EAW will consider cumulative impacts.
Keep the ATVs off the North Shore Trail, out of trout streams, and don't cross any trout streams.	The proposed trail routes do not cross any trout streams and are not near the North Shore Trail. A review of project impacts will be part of the GIS analysis and the EAW process.
Trail route needs to avoid and protect historically significant fur trading routes and portages around Big Sandy Lake.	This will be part of the GIS analysis and the EAW process. An review of historical and cultural data will be part of the EAW process.
Interested in bidding process to provide construction services for the project	There will be a public bidding process following trail design. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2008.
An ATV trail is a needed improvement and there are many restaurants and bars who will benefit and provide income and jobs	Duly noted.
The project will bring tourists to these small towns without costing a lot of money	Duly noted.
Concern about trail maintenance costs; Concern about operating costs	The trail will be supported through the statewide Grant-in-Aid program for maintenance needs.
Have been going to other states to ride and now hope to be able to stay in the area and spend money locally where the businesses need it	Duly noted.
This project looks like it could economically benefit the Big Sandy and Miniwawa Lake Area greatly	Duly noted.
Start trails at heavily populated areas where there are amenities like lodging, parking, etc. (ie., McGregor, Big Sandy, Shamrock Twsp, etc.)	The final route locations will be selected to balance economic interests, social considerations, and environmental protections.
ATV registrations trends have shown a recent decline and demand for trails may be overestimated	Duly noted.
Keep ATVs off township roads near Hill City. The maintenance is too expensive.	Trail alignments in this area are being reviewed.

People ride ATVs as a weekend trip and need signs along the route to reach destinations, find gas, food, lodging, etc. and good maps with this information to plan trips.	Duly noted.
Aitkin County has several large tracts of land adjacent to the Soo Line that could be designated, developed and utilized as “riding areas” rather than developing a long extensive trail through the County that will be difficult to patrol and maintain.	The grant awarded for the project was based on a proposal to develop a continuous trail system.
Need to get input from seasonal residents (who are 2/3 of the tax base). Undertake a survey of local and seasonal residents for their comment.	Project meetings are open to the public and meeting minutes and other pertinent information is available at website (www.70MileTrail.net). News releases about the project have been distributed statewide. Comments have been received from seasonal residents.
Need to include county attorneys so citations are prosecuted. Need to aggressively prosecute violations.	Duly noted.

Map and Trail Comments

The following tables summarize the comments related to specific trail segments and responses prepared by the Oversight Committee and GIS Sub-Committee.

Table 2. Map and Trail Comments

Gathered from written comment forms at public meetings

<i>Comment</i>	<i>Response</i>
Trail Segment 1	
Can there be an access route designated from Nashwauk to the Albon trail?	Beyond the scope of this project.
There is a campground in Nashwauk where ATV groups stay and would like a way to get there from the Albon trail and from points north of Nashwauk.	Beyond the scope of this project. Like a Pengilly/Nashwauk connector, an ATV club could initiate this.
Could bridges be used for ATVs to cross bike trails and major highways?	The project is not expected to cross any bike trails or major highways. This is beyond the scope of the project.
Need a trail or loop to connect Warba and businesses	Beyond the scope of this project.
Crazy Loon Bar/Grill and home of the Red Rock Riders ATV Club is right on the Albon Trail in Itasca County and offers food, offsale, large game room. There is also some parking for trucks and trailers.	Duly noted.

Sinclair and Iron Country Traders are two gas stations in Pengilly	Duly noted.
Would love to see a campground at Nameless Lake	Beyond the scope of this project. The project will not include building new campgrounds but would connect with existing facilities were appropriate
Live in Marble and would love to help with a trail system through there (Bovey-Taconite-Marble-Calumet to Pengilly)	ATV clubs are a good way to participate.
The Red Rock Riders ATV Club supports the proposed sections designated on Maps #1 & 2 (new trail that intersects with Albon trail, south to Warba, Jacobson to Hill City then connects with the Soo Line). Club would be interested in contributing to maintenance of the new trail from the Alborn south to Goodland and Warba.	Duly noted. ATV Clubs will be included in trail monitoring and maintenance activities.
Trail Segment 2	
Marked on map: 1) County campground, 2) gas/convenience/future camping, 3) ditchbank to Hay Lake	Beyond the scope of this project, but sensitive ecological area is noted and no designated trail there.
Jacobson has gas, convenience store, camping and rest area, and park for ATVers. Jacobson Landing Recreation area (owned by Township) has walking access to the river.	Duly noted, final trail segment has not been determined.
Trail Segment 3	
235 th Place is too narrow for the trail, children are present and ATVs create safety hazards. Want to see 235th Place removed from the proposed trail.	Duly noted.
Instead of 235 th Place, suggest taking the trail to the east side of Section 3 (Workman) and run on the section line to Grouse Street or start/end at Fishermans Bay and run on Grouse Street all the way.	Duly noted.
Concern about maintenance costs for Grouse Street (gravel, continuous grading), need agreement with County	Duly noted.
Issues with running ATVs on Hwy 232	Duly noted.
Not in favor of trail on Grouse Street	Duly noted.

Trail Segment 4	
Marked on map: X10: 340 th ave to Blandin #4 trail is heavily used now as shortcut to and from Hill City by ATVs and snowmobiles. They shouldn't be on 340 th Ave or East West 52-25 Road. Some road damage now occurs and potential to be made worse.	Trail not proposed in this area.
Marked on map: X2: ATV traffic across Hwy 200 over Hill Lake potentially hazardous to ATV and road vehicle traffic.	This is the UPM Trail and not a part of this project.
Marked on map: 0: Top of Quadna Mountain very scenic view, perhaps a spur?	This is private land and would need to be addressed by others.
Need to stay away from Mississippi River	An EAW will be done as a part of the 70 Mile Trail project taking into consideration environmental and historical data. This specific trail segment is not near the Mississippi River.
Trail Segment 5	
Concerned about permanent ATV route along County 14/Savanna Park	The 70-Mile Trail Project does not propose a route along or near County Road 14.
The Solana State Forest currently has no or very low levels of motorized recreation and should be preserved for non-motorized uses.	ATV use of the Solana State Forest is under the jurisdiction of the MN DNR. DNR rules and regulations will be followed.
Trail Segment 6	
No comments received.	
Trail Segment 7	
Good route to connect to Moose Trail and Outing, only ¾ mile of Road Ditch and not wet	Agreed.

Overview

The following table summarizes comments received and recorded on the draft alignment maps at various public meetings. The numbers in the tables reflect numbers marked on the corresponding trail maps. Duplicate numbers occur for maps for which more than one copy was provided at meetings.

Table 3. Map and Trail Comments from Public Meetings

Gathered from notes and comments made on the maps of draft trail alignments

<i>Number on map</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Response</i>
Trail map: Existing and Proposed Trails Map		
1.	Forest Legacy (UPM) Blandin Proposal	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
1.	Roadless	For review of alignment by GIS Committee

Trail map: Soo Line North to Savanna SF		
1.	Palisade One Stop Gas-307 Main Street, Palisade, MN and food in Palisade	Note on destinations along route, no response needed.
2.	Camping, showers, and restrooms	Note on destinations along route, no response needed.
3.	Trailer Parking	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
4.	Big Sandy Bar-51866-224 th Place, McGregor, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
5.	Fisherman’s Bay-50933 State Hwy 65, McGregor, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
6.	Big Sandy sports and gas	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
6.	Up North Riders-Eagle Point Lounge-49394 State Hwy 65, McGregor, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
1.	County Road 14 ditch ruts	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
1.	Trail should connect Bear Country to trail near Pier 65 Restaurant-48760 State Hwy. 65, McGregor, MN	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
2.	Power line alternate alignment	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
3.	Stay on Grouse Street	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
4.	This is crossing Private Property	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
5.	Workman Township 235 homes- 4 homes with children	For review of alignment by GIS Committee

6.	Spur 3 Grouse Street issue Township paid cost of maintenance?	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
7.	Potential alignment on fence line	For review of alignment by GIS Committee

Trail map: Soo Line N. Loop

1.	Lawler 2 ½ mi. with bar, parking, and outhouses	Note on destinations along route, no response needed.
2.	Towards Kettle River	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Damage	Comment unclear to GIS Committee.

Trail map: Rabey Line to Soo Line N.

1.	Goes over watercourse	Existing crossings along the proposed alignment.
1.	Swampland	Route will be aligned to minimize wetland crossings/impacts, and any wetland impacts will be mitigated per the MN Wetland Conservation Act.
2.	Country Club	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Need larger parking area @ public boat landing/signs to divert traffic to Rabey Line and Hill City	Improved trail parking is being assessed.
4.	Hwy 200 to 340 th Ave to Blandin #4 trail already heavily used as shortcut by both ATV's and snowmobiles to and from Hill City. Proximity of 70 mile trail and expanded use of #4 trail(Blandin Land) would increase heavily as riders learn of shortcut	Will be addressed with signage and enforcement.
1.	Swatara, MN parking	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
2.	Corner Club with food, gas, and party room-60967 US Hwy 169, Hill City, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Tough Crossing over water area	Alignment being assessed in this area.
4.	Quadna Mountain-Located 1 mile from Hill City on US Hwy 169	Duly noted.

5.	Hilltop Sports Sales and Service-333 Hwy 200 E., Hill City, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
6.	Access Point? Gravel pits/boat landing	Improved trail parking is being assessed.
7.	Needs signs to city, keeping people off	Will be addressed with signage and enforcement.
8.	Parts of this trail "impassable"	Being repaired under existing Grant-in-Aid program.

Trail map: Alborn/Pengilly to Rabey Line (South half)		
1.	Swan River One Stop Travel Plaza-16282 US Hwy 2, Swan River, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
2.	Shallow Lake Store with gas and food	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Motel-210 US Hwy 2, Warba, MN and tire repair in Warba	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
4.	Fred's good land	Duly noted.
1.	Miss. River Headwaters Board 500' cup?	Duly noted.

Trail map: Alborn/Pengilly to Rabey Line (North half)		
1.	Good Food	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
2.	Mr. Roberts-28179 E. Shore Drive, Penile, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Picnic area	Note on destination along route, no response needed.

Trail map: Swan Lake area		
1.	Power line Shelter Overlook	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
1.	Great view from Power line	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
2.	ATV/campground on Nameless Lake	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
3.	Mr. Roberts-28179 E. Shore Drive, Pengilly, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
4.	Swan Lake Sinclair-31277 Hwy 65, Pengilly, MN, Iron Country Trades, Crazy Loon Grill and Bar-16171 Half Circle Drive, Pengilly, MN with menu, off sale, pull tabs, and large game room.	Note on destination along route, no response needed.

4.	Trailer parking at the Crazy Loon Grill and Bar-16171 Half Circle Drive, Pengilly, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
----	---	--

Trail map: Warba Area		
1.	Food, fuel and bar near Culp Lake	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
2.	ATV trail loop into Warba	For review of alignment by GIS Committee
3.	Warba Motel-210 US Hwy 2, Warba, MN and Casper's Leather-10525 Wawina C, Wawina, MN	Note on destination along route, no response needed.
4.	Legion and sales, campgrounds, and Shallow Lake Store	Note on destination along route, no response needed.

Trail map: Solana Loop		
1.	Access between Soo Line	Revised map will show connection to Soo Line (along existing road grade).
2.	Access wetland?	Access will be along existing road grade.
3.	Access between Soo Line and trail	Revised map will show connection to Soo Line (along existing road grade).
4.	Number of wetland crossings-- too many?	Route will be field-aligned to minimize wetland crossings; Boardwalks will be constructed to minimize fill/impacts; Any wetland impacts will be mitigated per the MN Wetland Conservation Act.

Trail map: Soo Line N. to Moose River		
1.	Good ditch	Agreed.