

# Camp Ripley/Veterans State Trail: Q & A

## What does it mean to be a “state trail”?

There are many types of trails in Minnesota - hiking, bicycling, snowmobile and off-road vehicle trails, water trails, and others. Designated state trails must meet certain criteria under state law - for example, connecting points of natural, scientific, cultural and historical interest, following historic transportation routes, or connecting other state recreation facilities. The Department of Natural Resources seeks funding for trail development through the bonding process, and builds, manages and maintains the trail. The DNR is also charged with preparing a trail master plan.

## How was the Camp Ripley/Veterans State trail designated?

Through the grass roots effort of the Little Falls Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Camp Ripley Veterans State Trail (CRVST) received its official state trail designation in 2009. Conceptually, the CRVST is envisioned to be a true multi-use trail, providing direct motorized and non-motorized recreational use linkage between the Paul Bunyan Trail, Crow Wing State Park, near the Camp Ripley perimeter, to the Soo Line Trail south of Little Falls, and will be an important part of the Mississippi River Trail.



## Why is a trail master plan required?

State legislation requires that a master plan be prepared before any trail construction can occur. The master plan identifies a trail search corridor within which one or more potential alignments-trail routes-are located. Throughout the planning process, DNR consultant and Parks and Trails staff work closely with resource experts, local communities and trail users to identify important natural and cultural resources, scientific landscapes, and potential connections to parks, downtown districts, local or regional trails, and other points of interest. The planning process also results in decisions about the types of uses that are appropriate for the trail and how the trail will be managed. The resulting master plan is a blueprint for the development of the trail - a process that can extend for many years into the future.

## What will the trail look like?

Trail surface and width will be determined during the planning process based on factors such as trail uses, topography and land availability. The typical state trail has a 10-foot wide paved surface with at least two-foot shoulders; and 8-foot width is an option in constrained or low-use areas. The maximum grade should not exceed 5%, with certain exceptions. The DNR prefers to purchase a 100-foot-wide corridor from willing sellers where possible in order to allow for buffers, plantings, storm water control and grading. However, a narrower corridor may be possible in more constrained areas.

## Where will a trail go?

As a first step, we've identified a search corridor that generally follows the 2009 MN legislature state trail authorization (see above). The trail master plan will identify one or more potential alignments for the trail within or near that corridor.

The trail alignments may follow county or township corridors, or other public lands in the study area. However, it is not envisioned that the trail will be located entirely in or along road right-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users away from the road to provide access to scenic views of the river and natural and cultural amenities. The trail must also avoid wetland, high quality plant communities, and other sensitive resources. Land acquisition from willing sellers will be necessary in order to accomplish this goal.

## What uses will be allowed on the trail?

This will depend on community preferences, as established during the planning process. However, the CRVST is envisioned as a true multi-use trail. Different uses may be accommodated on separate paths within the same or on separate alignments. Most state trails are shared-use paved trails, and are used for bicycling, walking and running, and in-line skating. Most state trails are open to snowmobiles. Some trails include segments of

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separate natural-surface treadways used for horseback riding. Off-highway vehicles are used on a few state trails in Northern Minnesota; the majority of OHV trails are located in state forests.

## What is the process for planning the trail?

The trail master plan will be developed through a collaborative process between the DNR and local communities. A steering committee has been formed to guide the planning process. The effort is anticipated to take about a year, with several opportunities for public input and community involvement.

## How might a state trail benefit my family, community or business?

Trails bring significant health benefits through opportunities for regular, moderate exercise. They increase the safety of recreationalists by separating them from traffic, which is especially important for children and youth. Trails can link residential areas to schools, parks and downtowns commercial districts, giving people an alternative to driving.

Communities that support trails and respond to the needs of trail users have seen positive effects on their local economies. The DNR estimates that for five trails surveyed between 2007 and 2009, summer spending totaled nearly \$5 million. Most of that spending (95%) comes from visitors to the region. This brings new business to your town's shops and restaurants, helping them stay open for business and sustaining the local economy. It might even encourage young people to stick around, start a new business, and raise their families in the area.



## How will landowner concerns be addressed?

Landowners on or near a trail are often concerned about issues of liability, safety, and privacy. Minnesota, like almost all states, has a recreational use law that limits property owners' responsibility if a trail user strays onto their land. Trails rarely pose safety concerns. In a recent survey,\* 94% of law enforcement agency officers throughout Minnesota responded that trails are as safe or more safe than other public recreation areas and public spaces. Litter problems rarely if ever occur along state trails. And DNR trail specialist and local trail associations will work with landowners to preserve privacy through screening, fencing, or careful siting of a trail.

## For further information:

Visit [www.crvtrail.com](http://www.crvtrail.com), click on "Corridor Study" for periodic updates and upcoming meeting dates. Or contact these people:

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\*Research conducted by Schoenbauer Consulting, LLC.