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# The Interpretive Plan for State Trails

**Prepared by the  
Trail Planning Section  
Trails and Waterways Unit  
Department of Natural Resources**

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INTERPRETIVE PLAN FOR STATE TRAILS

Prepared by:

Trail Planning Section  
Trails & Waterways Unit  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1679

Principal Author:

Laurie Young  
Trail Planner

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## INTRODUCTION



## INTERPRETIVE PLAN FOR STATE TRAILS

### INTRODUCTION

What does "interpretation" mean? Why is interpretation of state trails important? What is the purpose of an "Interpretive Plan for State Trails"? What is the inter-relationship of this plan with other Department of Natural Resources (DNR) trail planning documents and other DNR interpretive programs and planning efforts?

Answers to these questions will provide an understanding of the scope of this plan and place it in context.

### Definition of Interpretation

What does interpretation mean?

There are a variety of definitions of the word interpretation. The one most frequently quoted is from the book Interpreting Our Heritage by Freeman Tilden. Tilden defines interpretation as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects by firsthand experience and by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate factual information".

A modification of this definition used by Robert Pert in his paper, "The Definition of Interpretation", prepared for the Association of Canadian Interpreters, 1976, provides a good working definition for planners and implementors of interpretation on state trails. Pert defines interpretation as, "any communication process designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage to the public through first hand involvement with an object, artifact, landscape or site."

The key phrases in this definition are, "communication process", "relationships of our cultural and natural heritage", and, "first hand involvement with a landscape or site". The phrase "communication process" is more appropriate than the phrase "educational activity" used in the first definition. The phrase "communication process" provides the interpreter with flexibility and a broad range of alternatives in the approach taken as well as in the tools

and techniques used. For example, the design and layout of a trail can communicate an interpretive message to the trail user, but is not an educational activity. The vast majority of trail users are not on the trail to be educated. The word "process" is also important because it implies interpretation is dynamic, ongoing and made up of a series of events. The interpretive "process" is very well suited for a trail user travelling a distance through a varied landscape.

Pert's definition also identifies the interrelationship of our cultural and natural heritage as the prime target for interpretation. Trails provide an excellent opportunity for interpreting interrelationships, again, because of the distance travelled and variety encountered.

Trails provide "first hand involvement with a landscape or site". An understanding of the identity and character of a region can be gained by a trail user after experiencing a state trail.

Interpretation has been identified by the Trails & Waterways Unit as an integral part of state trail development. Figure 1 illustrates how interpretation can fit in as a phase of state trail development. Although some interpretive efforts would take place while other trail work is being completed, the bulk would take place after the trail is open to the public.

# STATE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PHASES

Guidelines for the coordinated development, operation, and marketing of trails to ensure a consistently high quality product image . . . while encouraging appropriate interim use.

DNR Trails & Waterways  
10/14/83

PHASE		DESCRIPTION OF PHASES				APPROPRIATE WAY TO REACH CLIENTELE MARKETING:  (once their minimum requirements have been met)	
		1. CONSTRUCTION	2. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	3. ORIENTATION*	4. INTERPRETATION*		
p r o g r e s s i o n	<b>A</b> ACQUISITION  (Less Than 2 Day)	Adjoining landowners; incidental local citizens	<b>A1.</b> Land acquisition; minimal prudent treadway maintenance; emergency fencing; removal of hazards.	<b>A2.</b> Emergency resource management (e.g. to solve or prevent erosion, plant disease, and hazards to public safety).	<b>A3.</b> Boundary marking and signing necessary for public safety.	<b>A4.</b> Series of articles in local newspapers & in landowners newsletter to maximize awareness, appreciation & stewardship of trail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News release describing what's being done, plans &amp; schedule. "More info call . . ."</li> <li>Show on state map "under development"</li> <li>Start landowners' newsletter</li> </ul>
	<b>MASTER PLAN COMPLETED</b>						
	<b>B</b> PARTIALLY OPEN  (Less Than 2 Day)	Local citizens; incidental tourists	<b>B1.</b> Treadway constructed of approx. ½ day length; provide landowner privacy enhancements & interim parking.	<b>B2.</b> Landowner privacy enhancements as necessary.	<b>B3.</b> Interim trailhead signs and reassurance markers (e.g. ribbon or paint blazes); trail map with "under development" Call 880- . . . for info.	<b>B4.</b> Interpretive overview on map.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Departmental designation</li> <li>Articles with map in local papers; make clear it is still under development</li> <li>Send similar flyers to chambers of commerce; resorts</li> <li>Add to map order form w/ note: "under development"</li> </ul>
	<b>C</b> OPEN  (2 Day)	Adventuresome statewide trail users	<b>C1.</b> 2 day treadway constructed; provide interim parking & campsites.	<b>C2.</b> Spatial experience enhancements via vegetative management.	<b>C3.</b> Interim trailhead signs; permanent reassurance markers as necessary; permanent information signs; map still says "under development".	<b>C4.</b> Draft of raw interpretive data made available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mn/DOT signs up</li> <li>Incidental coverage in metro newspapers</li> </ul>
	<b>D</b> COMPLETED  (2 Day Trail)	Statewide general population & tourists	<b>D1.</b> Permanent parking, waysides & rest areas, trailheads, and campsites w/water developed.	<b>D2.</b> Botanical & historical enhancements.	<b>D3.</b> Permanent trailhead orientation kiosks; permanent distance and services signing; "Service Guide." Remove "under development" from trail map.	<b>D4.</b> Interpretive trail guide; interpretive overview on trailhead kiosks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GRAND OPENING</li> <li>Remove "under development" from order form, trail map &amp; state map</li> <li>Feature articles in all market areas (&amp; advertising)</li> <li>market to tour operators, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>E</b> FULL AUTHORIZED LENGTH COMPLETED	Long-distance trail users (depending on length & trail use)	<b>E1.</b> All of the above developed along entire authorized length of trail.	<b>E2.</b> All of the above along entire authorized length of trail.	<b>E3.</b> All of the above developed along entire authorized length of trail.	<b>E4.</b> All of above plus interpretive enhancements (e.g. on-site interpretation plaques, introductory cassette tapes) on entire trail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue ongoing marketing program</li> </ul>	

\*Primitive or wilderness trails will require less refined orientation and interpretive development.

Notes: (1) The progression of a trail thru the 5 phases is charted by use, in summary form in the master plans budgets. (2) Maintenance and enforcement functions, while necessary to have in place throughout the 5 phases, are not included in the above chart. (3) Some work may have to begin in prior phases in order for it to be effectively completed by the end of the phase for which it is "required" (e.g. vegetative management).

Figure 1.

Another purpose of this plan is to facilitate coordination of interpretive planning and implementation on a departmental level.

Finally, this plan is to provide guidance in the design, location and development of state trails. An understanding of the interpretive theme and interpretive goals has implications for trail design, location and development.

This plan is primarily intended for those developing interpretive plans for trails and for regional trails & waterways coordinators and Saint Paul staff supervising the process. It can also provide information useful to other interpretive planners.

#### Inter-relationship With Other DNR Trail Planning Documents

Direction and background for interpretive planning on state trails is provided by a number of documents. These include:

- The Outdoor Recreation Act (ORA) MN Stat. 86A.01 to 86A.11.
- "Minnesota Trails Policy Plan."
- DNR State Trail Policy.
- "Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trails."
- "Minnesota DNR Trail Plan."
- Individual master plans for State Trails.

These documents provide a historical perspective and context for this plan. The interrelationship of these documents with this plan is discussed below.

#### - Outdoor Recreation Act

The Outdoor Recreation Act establishes . . .

"an outdoor recreation system which will; (1) preserve an accurate representation of Minnesota's natural and historic heritage for public understanding and enjoyment; and, (2) provide an adequate supply of scenic, accessible and usable lands and waters to accommodate the outdoor recreation needs of Minnesota's citizens."

State trails are components of the outdoor recreation system.

Interpretation has a key role to play in fulfilling the mandate of the ORA. It is through trail location, design and interpretation that the public will come to understand, appreciate and enjoy the natural and historical heritage.

Interpretation also can play a role in the promotion of the outdoor recreation system by providing information on opportunities available in the system.

The ORA establishes four criteria which must be met in order for a trail to be authorized as a state trail.

Subd. 4. State trail; purpose resource and site qualifications; administration; designation. (a) A state trail shall be established to provide a recreational travel route which connects units of the outdoor recreation system or the national trail system, provides access to or passage through other areas which have significant scenic, historic, scientific, or recreational qualities or reestablishes or permits travel along an historically prominent travel route or which provides commuter transportation.

(b) No unit shall be authorized as a state trail unless its proposed location substantially satisfies the following criteria:

(1) Permits travel in an appropriate manner along a route which provides at least one of the following recreational opportunities:

(i) travel along a route which connects areas or points of natural, scientific, cultural, and historic interest;

(ii) travel through an area which possesses outstanding scenic beauty;

(iii) travel over a route designed to enhance and utilize the unique qualities of a particular manner of travel in harmony with the natural environment;

(iv) travel along a route which is historically significant as a route of migration, commerce, or communication;

(v) travel between units of the state outdoor recreation system or the national trail system; and

(2) Utilizes, to the greatest extent possible consistent with the purposes of this subdivision, public lands, rights-of-way, and the like; and

(3) Provides maximum potential for the appreciation, conservation, and enjoyment of significant scenic, historical, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which the trail may pass; and

(4) Takes into consideration predicted public demand and future use.

Again, interpretation can help fulfill the legislative intent by making the trail user more aware of, "the significant scenic, historical, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which the trail may pass" (criterion 3) which contributes to the enjoyment and appreciation of the trail.

Another reference to interpretation can be found relating to trail waysides in Subd. 4 (d).

(d) Facilities for the rest and comfort of trail users shall be provided primarily within units of the outdoor recreation system through which the trail passes. When additional facilities are required to ensure the rest and comfort of the traveler, the managing agency may develop such facilities along the trail and shall designate the facilities as trail waysides. In addition to the foregoing purpose, trail waysides shall be developed for the preservation and interpretation of the trail's natural, historic, or scenic values, and may include facilities for primitive camping, picnicking, sanitation, and parking for access to the trail.

- Minnesota Trails Policy Plan

This plan was prepared by the Inter-Agency Trail Committee with representatives from the Department of Natural Resources, State Planning Agency and Department of Economic Development, (now within the Department of Energy and Economic Development), Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Council. The purpose of this plan was, "to create a process which will ensure that state funded trails programs are coordinated and complementary".

"This plan establishes a planning process, criteria for evaluating trails proposals and policies to guide trail development and management. The final section of the plan deals with implementation and defines a procedure for state agencies to meet and mutually review each others proposals."

This plan identifies interpretation as a key component of a trail plan and thus underscores the importance of interpretation on trails, but there are few direct references to interpretation.

The plan states that site plans for each designated state trail should address interpretation. Two policies in the recreation management section directly relate to interpretation. They are:

"Orientation and interpretive materials, including maps, will be available at trail waysides and other support facilities, both public and privately owned, so that users may become acquainted with the trail's resources, facilities and routes as well as users rights and responsibilities" (p. 19, #3, a.).

"An interpretive program that is primarily self guiding will be developed for each state trail. Interpretive techniques such as those identified in the 1981 DNR report, Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trails will be implemented" (p. 20, #3, b.).

- DNR State Trail Policy

The DNR interpreted the ORA by developing policies for units it administers. In the Recreation Management section under general policy, two objectives apply directly to interpretation.

"To provide interpretive and informational programs to enhance users' experiences and to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural resources" (p. 8, D).

"To develop and distribute informational and promotional material for each state trail" (p. 8, E).

Policies in the Recreation Management section which relate to interpretation are:

"A theme shall be established for each trail which determines whether cultural, historical, scenic or scientific attributes or a combination thereof, will be the primary consideration in trail layout" (p. 9, #10).

"Facilities may be provided for the rest and comfort of trail users on the preservation and interpretation of a trail's natural, historical, or scenic values. Such facilities shall be provided primarily within other units of the outdoor recreation system through which the trail passes. When additional facilities are required, they may be developed and designated as trail waysides" (p. 9, #13).

"Facility structures and construction materials will relate to a trail's theme as determined by the master plan" (p. 10, #19).

"Interpretive programs shall relate to a trails theme and goal" (p. 10, #26).

"Informational and interpretive programs shall be developed to enhance users' appreciation, understanding, enjoyment and respect of the rights of adjacent landowners and the natural and cultural resources of the area through which the trail passes" (p. 10, #27).

"The Unit of Trails & Waterways, in cooperation with the Bureau of Information & Education, shall be responsible for the development and distribution to the public of informational and promotional materials for each designated state trail. Such materials shall include, but

not be limited to, trail and vicinity maps and self guiding brochures" (p. 10, #28).

- "Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trails"

This document establishes four goals to be used in developing an interpretive plan for a trail and evaluating its effectiveness. These four goals should be used as a basis for interpretation. They are:

To maximize the users enjoyment of the resources in the trail corridor.

To provide background information on major resource issues in the trail corridor, region and state.

To improve public understanding and support of the DNR state trail program and related DNR programs.

To assist managers in protecting natural, historic and cultural resources, trail related development and adjacent property.

- Minnesota DNR Trail Plan

In an attempt to consolidate all aspects of the DNR's diverse trail program, the Trails & Waterways Unit has developed the DNR Trail Plan. The plan calls for development of a select number of high quality state trails that show off natural and cultural diversity of Minnesota. Interpretation is proposed as a key element in communicating this diversity to trail users. Recommendations include:

"That interpretive plans be developed for each state trail.

That completed plans be reviewed and amended in light of statewide goals.

That interpretive development on state trails be given a high priority for completion.

That interpretive efforts be periodically monitored and modified to improve program efficiency and effectiveness."

In addition, the plan recommends development of two brochures for each trail. The trail users' handbook would in part strive to sensitize users to the needs of landowners adjacent to state trails in the hope of encouraging non-disruptive trail use. The landowners' handbook would alert those living adjacent to trails to their rights and obligations with respect to trail users and would contain phone numbers and other pertinent information to be used if disruptive behavior occurs on or near their property.

- Master Plans for State Trails

The interpretive sections of the master plans have been brief and general. They recommend interpretive themes which provide important direction for interpretive planning. The plans also provide information on the trails' resources and users. Recommendations are made for the location of interpretive facilities.

The interpretive plans developed for individual state trails will be addenda to the trail master plans.



HISTORY OF INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS ON STATE TRAILS



## HISTORY OF INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS ON STATE TRAILS

Several interpretive efforts have occurred relative to state trails. These efforts were made as a result of the need for interpretation expressed by trail users, field staff and Saint Paul staff. This expressed need served as an impetus for the development of the "Interpretive Plan for State Trails," which will refine and build on the interpretive accomplishments made thus far.

### Heartland Trail

A series of kiosks or information boards were developed along the trail at parking areas in Park Rapids, Dorset, Nevis and Akeley in 1982. A fifth kiosk has been designed and is scheduled for construction at the parking lot in Walker. The interpretive emphasis of these facilities is logging history. Other information included on these boards is: other state trails, area services, major plant communities, current land uses, railroad history, history of adjacent communities, common plants, topography and geology, adjacent trails, water resources, and how to determine the age of a tree.

A brochure entitled, "Along the Trail: A Guide to Nature on the Heartland", was published. This brochure is primarily a guide to common plants along the trail. These brochures can be obtained by request through the regional office at Bemidji, at several stores in communities adjacent to the trail, Chambers of Commerce in the area, and at the Nevis trail office. Copies were sent to area schools as a reference.

An area services guide has also been developed for the Heartland. This brochure lists emergency numbers (police, ambulance, fire, hospital, sheriff, Minnesota State Patrol, conservation officer, and DNR Area Forestry office). Locations where lodging, gas and camping are available as well as specific private campgrounds, resorts and motels are listed. Snowmobile servicing, bicycle rental and numbers to call for further information are available in the guide. A mileage chart provides distance information between communities on the Heartland. A map of the Heartland and adjacent trails is available in the brochure.

### Sakatah Singing Hills

Projects similar to the projects on the Heartland have been developed for the Sakatah Singing Hills Trail. A series of eleven signs or kiosks has been planned for the trail. Currently, only one of these has been developed. An eight sided kiosk, developed in 1983, is located adjacent to the trail in Mankato. The information which is displayed on these kiosks includes the history of Mankato, plant communities located along the trail, raptor identification, other state trail information, trail map, and area services. An outline of the information to be included on the other signs or kiosks exists, but due to lack of funds, there are no immediate plans to develop them.

A brochure entitled, "Your Guide to Nature along the Sakatah 'Singing Hills' Trail", has been published. Similar to the brochure for the Heartland, this brochure is primarily a field guide to the plants along the trail.

An area services guide containing information described above has also been developed for the Sakatah Singing Hills.

### Root River

A thorough resource inventory has been completed and written in draft form. The guidelines contained in this plan will be used to complete the interpretive plan for the Root River Trail.

### North Shore

Some initial inventory work on sites which have potential to be interpreted has been done.

### Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trail

This document was developed by the Trail Planning Section and establishes four goals to be used in developing an interpretive plan for a trail and evaluating its effectiveness.

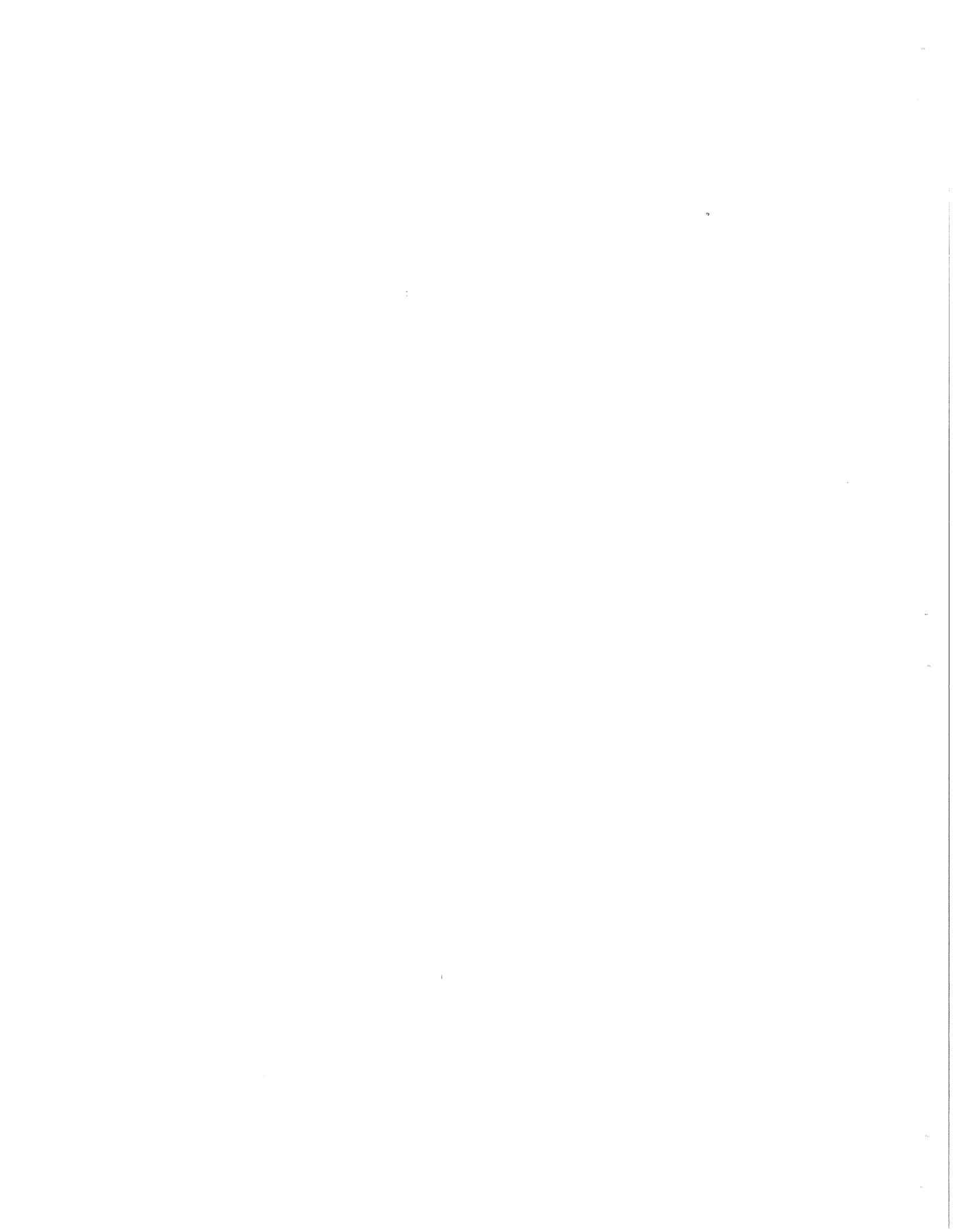
### Conclusion

Even though several projects have been completed on the Heartland and Sakatah Singing Hills trails, additional work remains to be done. There are additional sites which need interpretation as well as other interpretive opportunities to

be identified. These should be identified by use of the process and checklist outlined in this plan. The existing interpretive work has provided an excellent start on which to build an interpretive program for all state trails.



INTERPRETIVE THEMES



## INTERPRETIVE THEMES

### Purpose and Use of Interpretive Themes

There are several reasons why each state trail should have a unique interpretive theme. The interpretive theme will help give each trail a unique identity in the state system by succinctly stating what the trail can say about the state, and how the trail is unique and different from other state trails. The theme should help guide the development and shape the character of interpretive developments as well as other trail facilities. The theme can have implications for building design and location, sign design and location, trail design and location and publications. For example, if the theme reflects the undeveloped, wilderness character of an area, the facilities should be rustic, unobtrusive and perhaps few in number. The theme will also provide the thread of continuity that ties interpretive development together. Such continuity can make the desired message more easily understood by the trail user and can thus help interpretation be more effective.

The interpretive theme can be developed by identifying the significant outstanding resources of the trail. Often these resources will identify what is typical of the surrounding area or what makes the area different from the rest of the state. These resources should identify and define the "sense of place" or "sensory quality" (sight, sound, smell, feel) of the area. This means that after experiencing the trail, and aided by interpretive media, the user understands the identity and character of the area; the nature of the region. The user should be able to experience these resources on major portions of the trail, not just at one or two points.

These significant, outstanding resources can be identified by referring to the master plan for the trail and by interviewing people knowledgeable of the area's resources and how they fit into a statewide perspective. It is important the interpretive planner observe and experience the trail. Some useful questions that help in the development of the theme are: What should trail users be told about the trail? What overall impression should the trail user be left with after the experience? What would the trail user find interesting about the trail? What would capture his imagination and attention that he would want to know more about? A tentative theme can be written at this point. The theme should be substantiated or modified based on subsequent research.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIAL, PRE-PLAN INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIAL, PRE-PLAN INTERPRETIVE EFFORTS

There are five projects which could be initiated before the interpretive plan for the trail is completed. These projects would be developed to provide the trail user with information to enhance the experience, yet would not likely conflict with any decisions made during the interpretive planning process. The purpose of these projects is to provide trail orientation information and an interpretive overview. These projects could be implemented within a short time frame and be augmented by the recommendations in the interpretive plan. These projects are:

1. Information boards at major parking areas.
2. Area service guides.
3. Interpretive resources printed on trail maps.
4. Trail Users' Handbook.
5. Landowners' Handbook.

### Information Boards at Major Parking Areas

The information boards would be comprised of several panels. The design of the boards would be flexible so information could be changed and panels could be added or deleted. The type of information to be displayed on the panels includes user orientation information and an interpretive overview. The layout of the various panels would be standardized. Materials such as maps, signs, pictures and text to be used on the panels would be available. These materials and layouts will be developed jointly by the trail planning and trails operations sections. Standardized panels for which layouts and materials would be developed include:

- a. Rules and regulations -- Rules and Regulations of the Department of Natural Resources, Relating to State Recreational Trails (Minnesota Regulations NR 20).
- b. Other state trail opportunities.
- c. Trail map and adjacent trails.
- d. Area services.
- e. Interpretive overview.

The standardized layouts and materials are currently being developed. Information to be included is outlined below.

a. Rules and regulations -- NR 20 summarized

The rules and regulations panel would summarize NR 20 in a simple and positive way. This panel would illustrate NR 20 in a way which would inform the trail user of appropriate trail behavior. Management goals would be stated along with the trail users' role in fulfilling them.

b. Other state trail opportunities

A map of the state showing the location of other state trails would be included. Information would be included which would give some idea of the kind of experiences available on other state trails. This could be done through pictures or words. The variety of opportunities should be emphasized. Examples of other trail maps should be included along with phone numbers where additional information could be obtained. In some locations, it may be possible to distribute map order forms at this panel.

c. Trail map and adjacent trails

This panel should display the trail map, adjacent trails, access points and mileages.

d. Area services

This panel would include emergency numbers, other recreational facilities, other interpretive opportunities, campgrounds, resorts, motels, restaurants, repair, gasoline, rentals and community overviews.

e. Interpretive overview

A panel which provides a resource overview and interpretive highlights should be developed around the interpretive theme. Information to be included should be developed with input from the Regional Naturalists, Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinators and Regional Resource Coordinators. The purpose of this panel is to make the trail user aware of the significant resources of the trail and create an awareness and interest of the resources. Appropriate information to include on this panel would be major plant communities, current land uses, historical resources, major landscape features, wildlife and the inter-relationships of these.

### Area Service Guides

Area service guides should be developed for all trails. These guides should include emergency phone numbers, other recreational facilities, campgrounds, resorts, motels, restaurants, repair, gasoline, rentals, community overviews and resource overviews. The guide should provide more detail than the area services panel previously described. Interpretation of the region and trail should be included. All service guides should be a standard size and format. A specific recommendation regarding format and content will be made in the appendix.

### Interpretive Resources Printed on Trail Maps

Significant resources which would be of interest to the trail user, relate to the interpretive theme, or are unique features should be located on the trail map. Interpretive features could be labeled on the trail map, or if this approach would add too much clutter, a symbol and legend format could be used. A brief interpretive narrative discussing the interpretive theme and significant resources of the trail should be included.

### Trail Users' Handbook

The Trail Users' Handbook will help instill trail users with a strong sense of stewardship for the trail. It will strive to sensitize users to the needs and rights of landowners living adjacent to state trails in the hope of encouraging non-disruptive behavior on the part of trail users. An explanation of the impact of trail user behavior on trails resources will encourage appropriate trail user behavior.

### Landowners' Handbook

The Landowners' Handbook will strive to convey to the landowner the importance of trails and help define their role relative to the trail. It will alert them to their rights and obligations to the trail and its users and will contain pertinent phone numbers and other information which could be used if they have any questions or concerns.



CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE PLANS FOR STATE TRAILS



## CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETIVE PLANS FOR STATE TRAILS

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the checklist is to provide guidelines for the development of an interpretive plan for a state trail. Use of the checklist is meant to ensure that the same considerations are made for all trails. It is also meant to provide a format for the final product so there is consistency between regions.

The checklist is arranged by steps in the interpretive planning process. (See Figure 3 which illustrates the interpretive planning process.) The purpose for each step is given to lend an understanding of why the step is necessary and important to the process. Actions necessary to complete each step are then listed.

The information obtained and decisions made during the interpretive planning process should be documented and organized in a loose-leaf notebook. This type of format will facilitate changes or additions to be made to the plan.

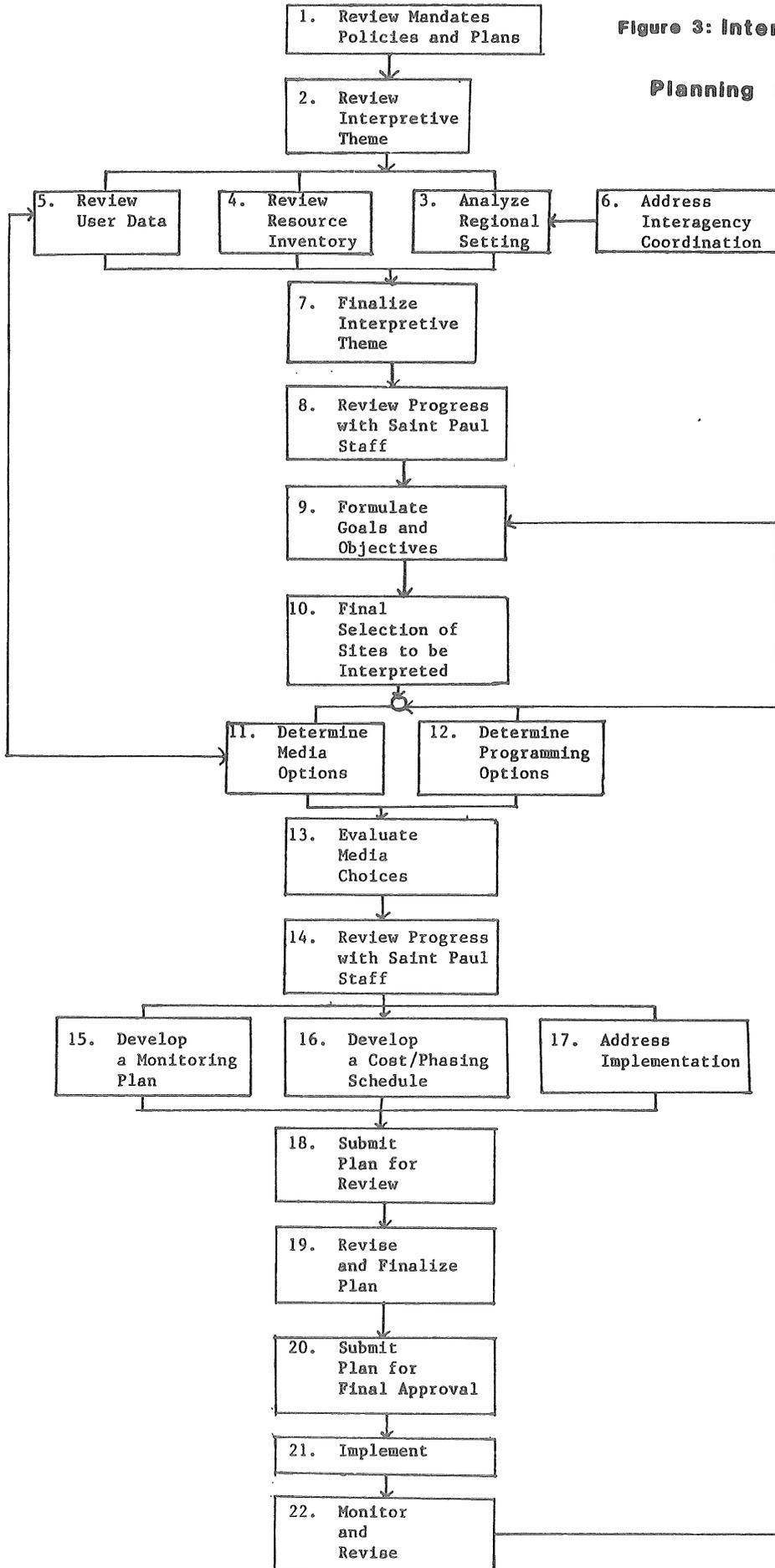
Good interpretation can't be developed by a "cookbook" format alone. Much depends on the inspiration and creativity of the interpretive planner. Thus, the checklist is designed to be used as a tool and has enough flexibility built in to allow for creativity.

It is difficult to determine how much time the development of the interpretive plans would take given the number of diverse variables. There is a lot of variety involved in such an estimate: trail length, diversity of resources, amount of information readily available for use, background of the planner, etc. A general time frame necessary for the completion of a plan would be six to twelve months of full time effort.

A time frame for the development of the plan should be determined at the beginning of the process by the person developing the plan, trail planning and the Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinators. A schedule could then be developed allocating time to each step of the process so that an inordinate amount of time isn't spent on any one step. It would be very easy to spend a great deal of time on the resource inventory step. It is necessary to allocate a reasonable amount of time to each step and be able to proceed to the next.

The cost for the development of the plan would be predominately for staff time. Travel expenses and a few supplies are also required.

Figure 3: Interpretive  
Planning Process



STEP 1

Review Legislative  
Mandates, Trail  
Policies and Trail  
Plans

Purpose: Direction and background for interpretive planning on state trails is provided by a number of documents. A thorough review of these documents will provide a historical perspective and context for the interpretive plan.

- [ ] Review pages 9 through 14 which summarizes the relevant aspects and direct references to interpretation found in legislative mandates, trail policies and trail plans. Each of these documents is listed below and may be reviewed in their entirety.
  
- [ ] Review the Outdoor Recreation Act (ORA), MN Stat. 86A.01 to 86A.11. The most pertinent portion of the law is Section 86A.05, Subd. 4. State trail; purpose; resource and site qualifications; administration; designation. Interpretation can help fulfill the mandate of the ORA.
  
- [ ] Review the "Minnesota Trails Policy Plan". This document was prepared by the Interagency Trail Committee with representatives from several state agencies. The purpose of this plan was to create a process that will ensure that state funded trails programs are coordinated and complementary.
  
- [ ] Review DNR State Trail Policy, approved April 23, 1982, as stated in the "DNR Manual", 1.8-5, pages 1-10. Several policies relate to interpretation on state trails.
  
- [ ] Review "Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trails". This document establishes four goals and 16 subgoals to be used in developing an interpretive plan. These goals should be used to guide the interpretive planning effort.
  
- [ ] Review the Minnesota DNR Trail Plan. Many of the goals and recommendations in the plan can be implemented through the interpretive program. The plan also addresses interpretation and makes several general recommendations.

[ ] Review the master plan for the trail. The master plan can serve as a source of inventory data on trail users and resources. Recommendations for interpretation provide some guidance.

Sources:

Copies of these documents can be obtained through the Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinators or the Trail Planning Section.

STEP 2

Review proposed interpretive theme      Purpose: An understanding of the proposed theme will help focus and direct initial data gathering and research.

[ ] Review the interpretive theme section, pages 19 through 22. This section defines interpretive theme and discusses how the theme relates to interpretive development. An interpretive theme has been suggested for each trail. This suggested theme is subject to modification based on subsequent inventory and analysis.

STEP 3

Analyze Regional  
Setting

Purpose: This analysis will provide an indication of how the trail relates to various regional classification schemes used by the DNR. This analysis will also help to ensure that appropriate resources will be interpreted, duplication of interpretive opportunities avoided, and coordination promoted.

- [ ] Determine in which recreational landscape the trail is located.
  - ° Is the trail representative of that landscape?
  - ° Determine which resources can be interpreted in a way that would provide the user with the knowledge and experience of the identity and character of the landscape.
  - ° Does another state trail represent this landscape better?
  - ° Is this landscape being interpreted by another DNR division or bureau, another agency or any other group?
  
- [ ] Summarize your findings on the recreational landscape in a brief narrative.
  
- [ ] Determine which Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes the trail is located in. This analysis will provide a framework for helping to define the setting, activities, and experiences the public might desire and how interpretation could provide them.
  - ° Does the trail provide recreational opportunities consistent with that setting?
  - ° Does the ROS classification have implications for interpretive facilities and programs on the trail. Some areas of consideration include facility design, amount of interpretation, media, theme and impact on goals and objectives.
  
- [ ] Summarize your findings on the ROS classifications in a brief narrative.
  
- [ ] Identify the interpretive opportunities within close proximity of the trail (25 miles approximately). Include state parks, state forests, county and municipal facilities and private facilities. Look for interpretive themes used, personal and non-personal media used and attendance.

° Visit as many sites as possible and observe as many of the opportunities as possible.

[ ] Summarize your findings on surrounding interpretive opportunities in a brief narrative.

Sources:

Landscape Regions:

Department of Natural Resources, Trails & Waterways Unit. "Minnesota's Recreational Landscapes for Trails."

"The Biocultural System," Interpretive Services Section, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Saint Paul, MN.

Lynch, Kevin, Managing the Sense of a Region. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, 1976.

Kratz, Tim and Gerald Jensen, "Minnesota Landscape Regions" Natural Areas Journal, April, 1983.

Snyder, Gary. The Real Work, Interviews and Talks 1964-1979, New Directions, 1980.

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS):

"ROS Users Guide" Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

Land Resource and Management Plan Project, Recreation Component, Office of Planning, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Saint Paul, MN.

Facilities Inventory:

"State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan" (SCORP) Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Saint Paul, MN.

MN Division of Tourism publications.

Chambers of Commerce.

#### STEP 4

Review resource inventory information Augment as necessary      Purpose: The inventory will; 1) result in a thorough understanding of the resource base, and 2) indicate which sites or resources should be interpreted.

#### Checklist

##### Vegetation

- [ ] Become familiar with the major plant communities along the trail. The following questions might be useful in focusing the review.
- Which plant communities are representative of the recreational landscape?
  - Which plant communities are representative of present land use practices?
  - Which plant communities are a result of past land use practices (agriculture, forestry, mining and fire)?
  - Are there any rare or unique communities or plant species identified as Elements by the Natural Heritage Program (NHP)? An Element is defined by NHP as a species that has priority for protection.
  - Are there any vegetation management practices of which trail users should be made aware (prairie restoration and forestry management)?
- [ ] Ideally, a map of these communities should be developed if one is not currently available.
- [ ] Write a brief narrative summarizing the major plant communities including answers to the relevant questions above or obtain documentation which provides relevant information.
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain plant communities, plant species, or vegetation management practices that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

Sources:

Aerial Photography:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) color aerial slides. These are available for reprint at ASCS offices.

Nine inch aerial photographs available from the MN/DNR-Bureau of Engineering and Wilson Map Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

High altitude aerial photographs -- available through the MN Department of Transportation and Wilson Map Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Books and Documents:

Fernald, M. L., Gray's Manual of Botany, Eighth ed., D. Van Nostrand Co., NY, 1970.

Marschner, Francis J., The Original Vegetation of Minnesota, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1930 (not published until 1978 by MN/DNR and USDA).

Gleason, H. A., and A. Cronquist, Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern U.S. and Adjacent Canada, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., NY, 1963.

Morley, Thomas, Spring Flora of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1974.

Peterson, R. T. and M. McKenny, A Field Guide to Wildflowers, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA, 1968.

Tryon, R. M., The Ferns and Fern Allies of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1954.

Curtis, J. T., The Vegetation of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI, 1959.

General Land Office Survey Notes:

These are available at the office of the Secretary of State, State Office Building, Saint Paul, or on microfilm at Wilson Map Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Phase II Forestry Inventory, MN/DNR-Division of Forestry.

Resource People:

MN/DNR-Natural Heritage Program

MN/DNR-Regional Naturalist

MN/DNR-Regional Resource Coordinator

Local colleges and universities

MN/DNR-Area Forester

## Checklist

### Geology

- [ ] Review the geologic history of the area the trail passes through in order to determine how the features of the present landscape were formed. It is suggested that this review include a look at the geologic eras (Precambrian, Paleozoic, Mesozoic and Cenozoic). The Cenozoic was the most recent period of glaciation and will often be the most important to focus on. Keep in mind you want to tell the story so it can be easily understood.
  - ° Include a review of the bedrock geology.
  - ° Include a review of the interrelationship of the geologic history with existing plant communities and current land uses.
  
- [ ] Write a brief narrative summarizing the major geologic events of the area or obtain documentation that provides the information.
  
- [ ] Determine if there are visible evidences of the geologic history (moraines, drumlins, eskers, outwash plains, lakes, bogs, outcroppings, etc.).
  
- [ ] List and map these features.
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain geologic processes, events, or features that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

### Sources:

Bray, Edmund C., Billions of Years in Minnesota, the Geological Story of the State, Science Museum of Minnesota. Saint Paul, MN, 1977.

Schwartz, G. M. and G. A. Thiel, Minnesota Rocks and Waters, University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis, MN, 1954.

Sims, P. K. and G. B. Morey, Geology of Minnesota, A Centennial Volume.  
Minnesota Geological Society, Minneapolis, MN, 1972.

Sansome, Constance J., Minnesota Underfoot a Field Guide to the State's  
Outstanding Geologic Features, Voyageur Press, 1983.

Resource People:

MN/DNR-Natural Heritage Program

MN/DNR-Regional Naturalist

MN/DNR-Regional Resource Coordinator

Local colleges and universities

## Checklist

### Soils

- [ ] Obtain a map and description of the soils adjacent to the trail.
  - ° Review the history of their formation.
  - ° Determine the interrelationship of existing soils with original plant communities and land use history, including erosion problems and current soil management.
  
- [ ] Summarize your findings on soils in a narrative or obtain documentation of the information.
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain soils related concepts or soil management techniques that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

### Sources:

County Soil Surveys available through local U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (SCS) offices.

Soil Atlas Sheets available from:

Coffey Hall Bulletin Room  
University of Minnesota  
Saint Paul Campus

## Checklist

### Wildlife and Fisheries

- [ ] Obtain existing lists of the non-game and game mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians that are likely to be found along the trail.
  - ° If possible and appropriate, obtain information on habitat and relative abundance.
  - ° Determine which species are rare, unique or of special interest. Use the species identified as Elements by the MN/DNR-Natural Heritage Program (NHP).
  - ° Determine if there are any wildlife management activities occurring along the trail.
  - ° Determine interrelationships of wildlife with land use history.
  
- [ ] Summarize your findings regarding the wildlife inventory in a narrative or obtain documentation that provides the information.
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain species, habitats, and/or wildlife management practices that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

#### Sources:

#### Books:

Breckenridge, W. J., Reptiles and Amphibians of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1970.

Green, Janet C. and Robert B. Janssen, Minnesota Birds, Where, When and How Many, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1975.

Burt, William H. and Richard P. Grossenheider, A Field Guide to the Mammals, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA, 1976.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Section of Wildlife, "Breeding Birds in Minnesota 1975-1979; Abundance, Distribution and Diversity," Minneapolis, MN.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Section of Wildlife, "Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Minnesota DNR Regions," Minneapolis, MN, \_\_\_\_.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Section of Wildlife, "Guide to the Non-game Mammals of Minnesota DNR Regions," Minneapolis, MN.

Eddy, S. and J. C. Underhill, Northern Fishes, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1976.

DNR Biological Reconnaissance reports on various rivers: MN/DNR-Section of Fisheries, Third Floor - Centennial Building, Saint Paul, MN.

Waters, Thomas F., The Streams and Rivers of Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1977.

Resource people:

MN/DNR-Natural Heritage Program

MN/DNR-Area Wildlife Manager

MN/DNR-Regional Naturalist

MN/DNR-Regional Resource Coordinator

Local colleges and universities

## Checklist

### Water Resources

- [ ] Identify the surface water resources visible from the trail.
  - ° Identify these on USGS quads or other appropriate map.
  - ° Review their geologic origin.
  - ° Review their physical characteristics (size, depth, water quality, flooding history, etc.).
  - ° Determine if there are any water resource management projects occurring.
  - ° Review any formal classifications associated with the water resource (Wild and Scenic River, wetland type, fisheries classification, etc.).
  - ° Determine interrelationship of the water resources with past and current land use practices, such as draining of wetlands, channelization of rivers, etc.
  
- [ ] Summarize the water resources inventory in a brief narrative or obtain documentation that provides the information.
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain water resources that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

### Sources:

United States Geological Survey (USGS), Hydrologic Atlas Sheets, available from  
Seventh Floor - Post Office Building, Kellogg Avenue, Saint Paul, MN.

MN/DNR-Division of Fish & Wildlife, Section of Fisheries

MN/DNR-Division of Waters

MN/DNR-Regional Hydrologist

## Checklist

### Historical Resources

- [ ] Review the history of the area focusing on the major events. Areas to review include:
  - ° Prehistorical Indians
  - ° Indian history
  - ° Fur trading
  - ° Logging
  - ° Settlement and development of communities
  - ° Transportation (railroads, riverboats, oxcart)
  - ° Farming
  - ° Milling
  - ° Industrial growth and development
  - ° Immigration
  
- [ ] Summarize your review of the history of the area in a narrative or obtain documentation that provides the information. It is easy to spend a lot of time in this review. It is important to limit yourself to the most important events.
  
- [ ] Determine the existing historic sites adjacent to the trail that document the history of the area.
  - ° Map these sites
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contain historical resources that contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail which should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

### Sources:

Minnesota Historical Society, A Historic Interpretation Program for the State of Minnesota. Saint Paul, MN, 1977.

Johnson, Eldon, The Prehistoric Peoples of Minnesota, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, MN, 1969.

Minnesota Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places --  
(Historical Society Library, Saint Paul, MN).

Folwell, W. N., A History of Minnesota, 4 vols., Minnesota Historical Society,  
Saint Paul, MN, 1969.

Upham, Warren, Minnesota Geographic Names, Minnesota Historical Society, 1969.

County Historical Societies.

Minnesota Historical Society Reference Library, Newspaper Collection,  
Saint Paul, MN.

## Checklist

### Modern Era

- [ ] Review current conditions adjacent to the trail including:
  - ° Current land uses
  - ° Population
  - ° Economy
  - ° Communities
  - ° Major industries
  - ° Current issues and controversies
  
- [ ] Summarize your findings in a narrative or obtain documentation that provides the information.
  
- [ ] Determine which specific sites along the trail document current conditions and should be interpreted (significant buildings, vistas of communities, vistas of typical land use, etc.).
  - ° Map these sites
  
- [ ] Identify sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted because they contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme.
  
- [ ] Identify other sites or segments of trail that should be interpreted for other reasons and present the rationale for including them.

### Sources:

State Demographer's Office, MN Department of Energy and Economic Development,  
Saint Paul, MN.

### Chambers of Commerce

Minnesota Land Management Information Center (LMIC) - (for maps and data of  
land use), MN Department of Energy and Economic Development, Saint Paul,  
MN.

STEP 5

Review user  
data

Purpose: The identification of user characteristics will assist in the determination of the content of the interpretive message and the manner in which it is delivered.

[ ] Review available data on existing and potential trail users. Sources include:

- ° Trail user surveys conducted by the MN/DNR-Trails & Waterways Unit, Trail Planning Section.
- ° State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Reports.
  - "Minnesota Snowmobile Report", Report Number 2322.
  - "Minnesota Cross Country Skiers", Report Number 2321.
- ° Other studies of Minnesota Trail Users.
  - MN Department of Natural Resources, Trails & Waterways Unit, "Minnesota Snowmobiler Market Segments and Resource Management Directions: A Qualitative Approach," 1982.
  - Ballman, G. E. and T. B. Knopp and L. C. Merriam, "Managing the Environment for Diverse Recreation: Cross Country Skiing in Minnesota". University of Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 544, 1981.
- ° Solicit input from the organized clubs and groups that are known to use the trail.

[ ] If the data are available, review the following for each user type:

- ° Number of users and their characteristics.
- ° Characteristics of the outing (miles traveled, duration, members of group).
- ° Aspects of the trail/trip that made the experience enjoyable.
- ° Activities associated with the users' trail experience (nature observation, picnicking, etc.).
- ° Desired improvements in their experience.
- ° Problems experienced by trail users.

[ ] Summarize implications for the development of interpretation along the trail based on the user analysis.

STEP 6

Address interagency  
coordination

Purpose: Many opportunities exist for coordination between agencies. Identifying and maximizing opportunities for coordination is a cost efficient method for achieving mutual and compatible agency goals.

[ ] Identify all federal, state and local agencies, private groups and adjoining landowners that have potential for coordination in the development and implementation of interpretive facilities and programs.

The following questions help to identify opportunities for coordination:

- ° Become aware of the agencies, private groups, and adjoining landowners administering land bordering the trail?
- ° Do agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners offer services located near the trail that would be of interest to the trail user?
- ° Do agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners want to inform the public about their management goals?
- ° Do agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners want trail users to use the recreational opportunities they offer?
- ° Do agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners supply potential trail users?
- ° Can the agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners promote the trail?
- ° Do agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners sponsor special events that may be of interest to trail users?
- ° Are there natural or cultural resources the agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners administer that would contribute to the trail users' understanding of interpretive theme or landscape region?
- ° Can the trail complement the opportunities provided by the other agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners?
- ° Can trail users' behavior positively or negatively affect the management goals of the other agencies, private groups, or adjoining landowners?

[ ] Meet with appropriate staff from the agencies, or private groups, or the adjoining landowners where potential for coordination exists.

- ° Identify their needs and concerns relative to the trail.
- ° Identify areas of potential coordination.
- ° Identify specifically how the coordination could occur (signing, facility development, programming, promotion, publications).

[ ] Summarize meetings.

- ° Discuss any consensus reached regarding areas of coordination.
- ° Identify specifically how this coordination will be implemented.

[ ] Obtain a memorandum of agreement from the cooperating group or individual.

## STEP 7

Finalize  
interpretive theme

Purpose: The interpretive theme identified in Step 2 may require modification based on the information obtained in the process thus far.

Because the concept of interpretive theme is abstract, it is difficult to provide a checklist to aid in the determination of one. The analytical skills and creativity of the planner must be used in the development of an appropriate theme. The following questions will help in the determination of the theme and provide a check as to whether the theme will accomplish its purposes.

[ ] If the proposed interpretive theme needs to be modified, write a new or modified theme. Does the new or modified theme answer the following questions?:

- ° Does the theme explain the area's significance and reflect the identity and character of the recreational landscapes?
- ° Does the theme give the trail a unique identity relative to other state trails?
- ° Does it portray the sensory quality of the landscape?
- ° Does it help the user identify the resources that make the trail unique?
- ° Does it reflect the experience the trail provides?
- ° Solicit opinions on the modified interpretive theme from the regional staff and the Saint Paul staff.
- ° Revise based on the above considerations.

STEP 8

Review Progress with Saint Paul Staff      Purpose: An informal discussion at this point will facilitate the planning process by allowing interested and knowledgeable parties to comment and provide input early in the process. Areas where Saint Paul staff can provide assistance can be identified.

[ ] Meet with representatives of the Trail Planning and Trails Operations sections to discuss progress of the interpretive planning process. Regional Trails & Waterways coordinators, regional naturalists and other parties involved in the process should also be included.

- ° Review progress and summarize findings.
- ° Identify roadblocks and problem areas.
- ° Identify areas where Saint Paul staff can provide assistance and outline what kind of assistance they could provide.
- ° Allow time for comment and input by those in attendance.

STEP 9

Formulate goals  
and objectives

Purpose: The development of goals and objectives will direct the interpretive planning effort by formally stating the purpose and desired outcomes of interpretation on state trails. This will help ensure all products and efforts will be purposefully directed.

- [ ] State goals as set forth in "Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for DNR State Trails."
  
- [ ] Write a brief, general paragraph as to how interpretation of the state trail can contribute to the attainment of each goal. Use the SUBGOAL\* and QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER sections in "Guidelines for Developing Interpretive Plans for State Trails" to assist in the development of this section.

STEP 10

Final selection of sites to be interpreted on a trailwide basis

Purpose: An organizing principle should be determined which will provide an ordered story line or logical sequencing of the sites. This will help make a cohesive package that makes sense to the trail user. Also, the final number of sites needs to be determined to ensure that too many sites aren't developed and the trail isn't "overinterpreted".

[ ] Review the sequencing of sites to determine an organizing principle or ordered storyline. The following questions might be useful in determining the organizing principle.

- ° Does the sequencing of sites allow a historical progression (from early logging to modern logging)?
- ° Can the sites be segmented according to subthemes which give each segment a unique identity?
- ° Can you determine another organizing principle or way to organize the sites?

[ ] Is the number of sites reasonable? Reduce the number if there are too many.

It is difficult to state guidelines for determining the appropriate number of sites. Keep in mind who the trail users are and how often it would be reasonable for them to stop. Keep in mind you don't want the interpretive facilities to intrude on the experience. Also, there should be opportunities for the trail user to discover the trail. The trail shouldn't be overinterpreted to the point it eliminates all sense of discovery and mystery. Sometimes the best way to interpret is not to interpret. Not everything should be interpreted.

[ ] Develop a goal and objectives for each site to be interpreted. A goal should state the overall purpose of what the site should do. A goal can be a fairly abstract statement. The objectives define how the goal can be specifically accomplished. Objectives outline a course of action. They can be attained and they are measurable. The objectives will be used to evaluate whether or not the goal has been accomplished. The objectives

should be behavioral; that is, they can be measured by observing the behavior of the trail user (such as response to questions).

An example of a goal and objectives for a site along a trail follows.

Goal: To interpret the wetland community which can be observed at this site.

Objectives: To provide information on how the wetland was formed.

To provide information on how a wetland such as this is a typical feature of the landscape region and of its importance and function in the region.

To provide information on the characteristic plant and animal life. After reading the display a user should be able to name five characteristic bird species.

To provide information on the characteristic plant species of the wetland. After reading the display the user should be able to name five characteristic plant species.

To provide information on the inter-relatedness of the components of wetland.

[ ] Select the final list of sites to be interpreted. Base this final selection on the resource inventory and analysis, user analysis, regional analysis, interpretive theme, and goals and objectives.

- ° Does each site contribute to an understanding of the interpretive theme?
- ° Does each site contribute to an understanding of the landscape region?
- ° Is each site appropriate for the trail's user groups?
- ° Does each site contribute to the fulfillment of the goals and objectives?

Sources:

Dustrude, James, "Trails: Environmental Symphonies for the Senses."  
Architecture Minnesota. August 1980, pp. 46-47.

## STEP 11

Determine media options                    Purpose: This step will provide a systematic analysis of the suitability and desirability of the various media relative to each site.

[ ] Review the alternative interpretive media available and their advantages and disadvantages.

[ ] The attached media matrix can be used to evaluate media relative to each site and for the trail as a whole. It is a tool to be used in the evaluation of media.

Using the matrix is beneficial in determining media options because it provides an objective analysis relative to the site. However, in general three options are frequently the most advantageous relative to the factors. They are signs, brochures, and kiosks/information boards.

It is recommended that information boards be developed at major parking areas and waysides as needed. The design for the modular unit is found in the appendix. Metal photo signs are recommended to be used to interpret specific resource sites along the trail. If more space is needed, a kiosk or information board is warranted. Wood routed signs should be used when a resource site is named.

[ ] List the interpretive sites and recommended media for each.

### Sources:

Sharpe, Grant W., Interpreting the Environment, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1976, pp. 81-376.

Grater, Russell, K., The Interpreters Handbook, Methods, Skills and Techniques, Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1976.

Krumbein, William J., Jr. and Linda Leyva, The Interpreters Guide, California Department of Parks & Recreation, Sacramento, CA, 1977.

Mink, Larry and Marlene Schweinforth, The Interpreters' Manual, North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department, Bismarck, ND, 1982.

Lewis, William J., Interpreting for Park Visitors, Eastern Acorn Press., (Eastern National Park and Monument Association), 1980.

### Media Matrix for Evaluation of Non-Personal Interpretive Media

This matrix has been designed to help the interpretive planner select media that are most effective in conveying the interpretive message. It can be applied to a particular site or the trail as a whole. The matrix is meant to provide a framework for analysis. Factors other than those included in the matrix may ultimately be deciding.

Factors affecting the suitability and desirability of media relative to a given site are listed at the left margin. Each medium should be rated according to whether or not it provides advantages or disadvantages relative to each factor. The following point system should be used:

- 2 - Medium provides a big advantage relative to this factor
- 1 - Medium provides somewhat of an advantage
- 1 - Medium provides somewhat of a disadvantage
- 2 - Medium provides a large disadvantage
- 0 - Not a consideration

The media that receive the highest total scores should receive the strongest consideration.

MEDIA MATRIX FOR EVALUATION OF NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

Factors to consider in the selection of interpretive media

- SCORE: 2 - media provides a big advantage relative to this factor  
 1 - media provides somewhat of an advantage  
 -1 - media provides somewhat of a disadvantage  
 -2 - media provides a large disadvantage  
 0 - not a consideration

	METAL PHOTO SIGNS	WOODROUTED SIGNS	SILK SCREEN SIGNS	LEAFLET/BROCHURE	AUDIO STATION	PORTABLE CASSETTE	INDOOR EXHIBITS	OUTDOOR EXHIBITS	VISITOR CENTER	COMMENTS
1. Initial development cost										
2. Replacement cost										
3. Routine maintenance costs										
4. Potential for vandalism										
5. Capability of attracting the attention of user group(s) interpretive message is intended for										
6. Visual obtrusiveness of media on the site										
7. Site or resource deterioration										
8. Special effects needed to maximize impact on trail user (sounds, illustrations)										
9. Amount of information to be presented										
10. Desirability of souvenir value or future reference value of message										
11. Effects of weather										
12. Litter potential										
13. Easily modified for future changes										
14. Number of users per media unit										
15. Ability to fulfill a temporary need										
16. Ability to communicate desired message										
17. Ability to allow visitor to participate										
Other factors:										
TOTALS										

[50]

STEP 12

Determine programming options

Purpose: Interpretation on state trails will primarily be self guiding. However, whenever possible and appropriate, self guided interpretation should be augmented with personally conducted programs. This step will provide a systematic analysis of the suitability and desirability of various personally conducted programs on the trail.

- [ ] Review interpretive programming options already available or in close proximity to the trail. Take advantage of them where appropriate. A good example is when a state trail passes through a state park.
- [ ] Review the alternative type of personally conducted programs and their advantages and disadvantages.
- [ ] The attached matrix can be used to evaluate different types of programs.
- [ ] Identify resources (both staff and financial) available for implementation of interpretive programs.
- [ ] List the types of programs recommended for the trail.
  - ° Are these programs appropriate relative to the interpretive theme.
  - ° Are these programs appropriate relative to the regional classification schemes.

Sources:

Sharpe, Grant W., Interpreting the Environment, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1976, pp. 81-376.

Grater, Russell, K., The Interpreters Handbook, Methods, Skills and Techniques, Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1976.

Krumbein, William J., Jr. and Linda Leyva, The Interpreters Guide, California Department of Parks & Recreation, Sacramento, CA, 1977.

Mink, Larry and Marlene Schweinforth, The Interpreters' Manual, North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department, Bismarck, ND, 1982.

Lewis, William J., Interpreting for Park Visitors, Eastern Acorn Press, (Eastern National Park and Monument Association), 1980.

MEDIA MATRIX FOR EVALUATION OF INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS REQUIRING STAFF ON SITE

Factors to consider in the selection of type of interpretive program for a trail

- SCORE: 2 - program provides a large advantage  
 1 - program provides somewhat of an advantage  
 -1 - program provides somewhat of a disadvantage  
 -2 - program provides a large disadvantage  
 0 - not a consideration

INFORMATION  
DESK  
(Booth)  
CONDUCTED  
TRAIL  
ACTIVITY  
CAMPFIRE  
TALK  
AUDITORIUM  
TALK  
(Off Site)  
LIVING  
DEMONSTRATION  
COMMENTS

	INFORMATION DESK (Booth) CONDUCTED TRAIL ACTIVITY	CAMPFIRE TALK	AUDITORIUM TALK (Off Site)	LIVING DEMONSTRATION	COMMENTS
1. Number of potential participants					
2. Characteristics of potential participants (type of trail users and their characteristics)					
3. Manpower available to conduct programs					
4. Funding available to conduct programs					
5. Special equipment needs; are they available?					
6. Coordination with special events on the local level					
7. Need for trail promotion on the local, regional or state level					
8. Need for explanation of DNR resource management programs along trail					
9. Need for education of trail users in order to promote appropriate use of the trail and its resources and opportunities					
10. Need for explanation of a trail's resources					
11. Cost effectiveness of program; dollars spent; number of participants					
12. Potential for coordination with other DNR divisions					
OTHER:					
TOTALS					

[52]

STEP 13

Evaluate media choices on a trail wide basis

Purpose: An analysis of media on a trail wide basis will provide the opportunity to develop a coordinated, consistent media package which can be efficiently implemented and maintained. This analysis will ensure that the selected media are compatible in a trail wide context.

- [ ] Determine the final mix of media by considering the following questions:
  - ° Which are most appropriate with regard to the interpretive theme?
  - ° Which are most appropriate with regard to the regional analysis?
  - ° Which are most appropriate with regard to the mix of users?
  - ° Do the media work well together to create a coordinated, easily identifiable, cohesive system of media on a trailwide basis?
  
- [ ] Make any necessary adjustments to the list of interpretive sites and recommended media made in Step 11.

STEP 14

Review Progress with Saint Paul Staff Purpose: An informal discussion at this point will facilitate the planning process by allowing interested and knowledgeable parties to comment and provide input early in the process. Areas where Saint Paul staff can provide assistance can be identified.

[ ] Meet with representatives of the Trail Planning and Trails Operations sections to discuss progress of the interpretive planning process. Regional Trails & Waterways coordinators, regional naturalists and other parties involved in the process should also be included.

- ° Review progress and summarize your findings.
- ° Identify roadblocks and problem areas.
- ° Identify areas where Saint Paul staff can provide assistance and outline what kind of assistance they could provide.
- ° Allow time for comment and input by those in attendance.

STEP 15

Develop a monitoring plan Purpose: Monitoring use and satisfaction will provide information necessary for modification of interpretive facilities and programs. Monitoring and subsequent modifications will help ensure that the interpretive program will fulfill its goals and objectives.

[ ] Review alternatives for monitoring use and satisfaction with interpretive facilities and programs and their advantages and disadvantages as reviewed in the "Technical Appendices".

[ ] Review the current monitoring efforts of overall trail use.

- ° Can the necessary information relative to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the interpretive program be obtained from current monitoring efforts?
- ° Can current monitoring efforts be modified to obtain the necessary information?

[ ] Recommend a monitoring method or methods that are appropriate for the trail and identify at what stages of interpretive development each should be implemented.

Sources:

See the monitoring section in the Technical Appendices of the "Interpretive Plan for State Trails."

STEP 16

Develop a  
cost/phasing  
schedule

Purpose: The development of interpretive facilities  
and programs will be prioritized and cost estimates  
generated to facilitate implementation.

- List each site to be interpreted with a breakdown of projects which  
comprise the total interpretive package of that site.
  
- Generate cost estimates for each project.
  
- Complete a cost/phasing schedule for all recommended facilities and  
programs. Use the following format.

STEP 17

Address  
implementation

Purpose: Identifying who will be responsible and accountable for the development, operations and maintenance of interpretive development will facilitate implementation.

[ ] Identify key actors who will have major roles in implementing the plan and briefly discuss what their responsibilities are as defined by current operational procedure.

[ ] Identify any additional staffing needs. Include amount of time required, job responsibilities, classification and cost.

STEP 18

Submit plan for  
review

Purpose: The review process will provide an opportunity for additional input and comment by those with expertise and experience on the resources inventory analysis, user analysis and final recommendations.

[ ] Submit a copy of the plan to the following and allow at least two weeks for response:

- Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Trails & Waterways Unit.
- Supervisor, Trail Planning Section, Trails & Waterways Unit.
- Supervisor, Trails Operations Section, Trails & Waterways Unit.
- Regional Naturalist.
- Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinator.
- Interpretive Services Coordinator, Division of Parks & Recreation.
- Other DNR Divisions and Bureaus, if the trail borders land they administer and coordination of interpretive efforts is planned.

[ ] Revise plan if any major issues or problems arose during the review.

[ ] Submit a copy of the revised plan to the following if they have been actively interested in or contributed to the development of the plan.

- User group representatives.
- Local historical society.
- Local units of government.
- Resource specialists from local colleges and universities.
- Minnesota Historical Society.
- Administrators of other interpretive areas nearby.

STEP 19

Revise and finalize plan      Purpose: The purpose of this step is to resolve any problems and issues that arose during the review and incorporate all appropriate comments received.

- [ ] Meet with those reviewers who have major concerns about the plan that should be resolved and reach consensus.
  
- [ ] Acknowledge receipt of all written comments received, and respond to reviewers concerns. Explain why or why not their comments will or will not be incorporated into the plan.
  
- [ ] Revise plan, incorporating all necessary changes.

STEP 20

Submit plan for  
final approval

Purpose: The purpose of this step is to obtain a written memorandum of concurrence from key reviewers and implementors.

- [ ] Submit plan for final review to:
  - ° Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Trails & Waterways Unit.
  - ° Supervisor, Trail Planning Section, Trails & Waterways Unit.
  - ° Supervisor, Trails Operations Section, Trails & Waterways Unit.
  - ° Regional Naturalist.
  - ° Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinator.
  - ° Interpretive Services Coordinator, Division of Parks & Recreation.
  
- [ ] Obtain memoranda from the above stating their concurrence with the plan.
  
- [ ] Attach the memoranda of concurrence as an appendix to the plan.

STEP 21

Implement

- Make any final changes necessary.
- Submit final copy to Supervisor, Trails Operations Section, and Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinator for implementation.
- Distribute final copies of the plan which will serve as an addendum to the trail master plan.

STEP 22

Monitor and revise  
on an on-going  
basis

Purpose: The purpose of this step is to determine whether the goals and objectives of the interpretive program are being met and to make any necessary revisions.

[ ] Review information obtained from the monitoring program.

[ ] Does this information indicate the goals and objectives of the interpretive program are being met?

- ° If the answer is yes, no modifications are necessary.
- ° If the answer is no, modifications to either the goals and objectives or the interpretive program as outlined in the interpretive plan are necessary.
  - Are the goals and objectives still relevant? If not, modify them to reflect the new conditions or situation.
  - Do the interpretive facilities and programs need modification? If so, write a memorandum discussing the modifications necessary including a justification for the change. Submit it to Supervisor, Trail Planning Section; Supervisor, Trails Operations Section; Regional Trails & Waterways Coordinator, and Regional Naturalist for approval. Attach to the plan as a revision.