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Trail Improvement Project Will Draw 100+ Volunteers to Area Boardwalks will be replaced

Cross Plains, Wis (May 9, 2024) –More than 100 Ice Age Trail Alliance volunteers will converge in Barron, Rusk, and Washburn counties next week with one goal: improve the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

The volunteers are taking part in a large-scale Trail improvement project, which is happening May 15-19 on the Hemlock Creek Segment of the Ice Age Trail.

“The portion of the Trail near the Murphy Flowage is one of the more popular in the area,” says Patrick Gleissner, Trail Operations Coordinator. “As such, it’s in need of a little upkeep and love,” he says.

During this project, five new boardwalks are slated for construction and installation. These boardwalks will replace existing boardwalks or other structures that are about 15 years old.

Because of frost heave, the existing boardwalks have become twisted and hilly. To eliminate this problem and keep the new boardwalks sturdy, Gleissner says wetland pans will be used instead of pilings. The pans, which lay on top of the ground, aren’t impacted by frost the way pilings are.

In addition to building boardwalks, volunteers will clear Trail corridor, work on tread maintenance, and refresh the Trail’s blazes and other signage. The signage work includes replacement of a kiosk near the Trail in Birchwood.

The Kick Off to Trailbuilding Season

This Hemlock Creek project kicks off the Ice Age Trail Alliance’s Trailbuilding season. From May through October, the Alliance hosts at least one large project each month.

“People from all across the state—even some from Illinois—come to these large-scale projects,” says Gleissner. Some volunteers come to work for a few hours, a day, or the whole weekend. Many volunteers will camp in the area. Some especially ardent volunteers show up for multiple projects over the next six months. “It’s incredibly impressive to see the amount of work that gets accomplished on the Trail, for the Trail, because of the volunteers.”

In 2023, Ice Age Trail volunteers devoted 100,666 hours to Trail-related activities. This is the fifth highest number of volunteer hours in the National Park Service (among parks that participate in the Volunteer-in-Parks program).

The next Trailbuilding project in this area will take place in the Blue Hills in October.

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About the Ice Age National Scenic Trail:

The Ice Age National Scenic Trail is a 1,200-mile footpath contained entirely within Wisconsin. It traverses the state from St. Croix Falls in the west, to Sturgeon Bay in the east, going as far south as Janesville. One of 11 National Scenic Trails, the Ice Age Trail highlights the landscapes that were carved out by ancient glaciers, which happen to be some of the most beautiful areas in the state. Approximately 60% of Wisconsin residents live within 20 miles of the Ice Age Trail.

About the Ice Age Trail Alliance:

The Ice Age Trail Alliance is a nonprofit, member and volunteer-based organization which conserves, creates, maintains, and promotes the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. For more information visit iceagetrail.org.