



Connecting people to the hills, valleys, parks and natural areas of Southwest Wisconsin.

Concept Plan

Imagine traveling along a footpath that wanders through the woods, prairies, farms, bluffs and streams of Iowa County's Driftless landscape. Whether you have boots, shoes, skis, or snowshoes on your feet, exploring all or part of the 50-mile Driftless Trail will allow you to reach the valleys, vistas, cultural sites and geologic features that make this area so widely renowned.

While a drive through this area serves up incredible snapshots of its natural beauty and cultural heritage, the Driftless Trail will give its users an entirely different experience. The trail will cross primarily private lands, providing an intimate and unique look at this unglaciated landscape. Its unique nature and strikingly beautiful setting will surely attract the substantial number of southern Wisconsinites who are known to want more hiking-only trails to explore. While meeting this recreational need, the Driftless Trail will also serve to foster health and well-being, land and water conservation, community and family ties, and learning about nature, history, and agriculture throughout the 200 square mile project area.

The Driftless Trail is a grassroots initiative led by the Driftless Area Land Conservancy, with invaluable input from local organizations, individuals, and communities. Technical assistance for this project was provided by the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service.



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*Prepared by Barb Barzen, Driftless Trail Coordinator, and the Driftless Trail Planning Team
October 2018*

The Driftless Trail Idea

The Driftless Trail is the brainchild of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC), the land trust for Iowa, Lafayette, Richland, and parts of Sauk, Dane, Green and Grant counties. DALC has gathered and led a substantial partnership of skilled individuals and organizations to plan and develop this project.

DALC's mission is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscapes through land protection and restoration, and to connect people to the land and to one another. What better way to do this than with a footpath that meanders through the ridges, valleys, prairies, savannas, woods, and farms of the southern Driftless region ?

The idea is to develop approximately 50 miles of foot-traffic-only trail that connects Governor Dodge, Blue Mound, and Tower Hill State Parks plus the Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area, two fishery areas, and cultural sites in between.

This idea is as unique, challenging, and exciting as the landscape this trail will meander through. Around 90% of the project area is privately owned, so the trail will primarily lie on properties of willing landowners, making a large, previously inaccessible area available to many more people. Outside of Europe, public-access trails that cross primarily private lands are rare. Fortunately, the nearby Ice Age Trail serves as a valuable model to learn from.

Trails designed for foot traffic only (hiking, running, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing) are also relatively rare compared to multi-use trails, and are greatly preferred by hikers. Much of the Ice Age Trail, some state park trails, and all trails in State Natural Areas are foot-traffic only, but most trails in this area (Military Ridge Trail, Great Sauk Trail, etc.) are multi-use. The Driftless Trail will connect and greatly expand foot-only trail options in this region.

The trail will also link communities and grow our tourism economy. Seven local communities will serve as gateways to the trail (see page 7) and will provide amenities to trail users. We will work closely with each to develop promotions and programs that benefit businesses, trail users, and communities alike.

The Driftless region contains natural resources that are of global, continental, and statewide significance. This project will help DALC focus its work with landowners to protect and manage the health, diversity and beauty of lands within the trail corridor and surrounding viewshed.

The Driftless Trail project is a community conservation strategy that will protect unique natural resources, create a recreational walking trail that connects people to our unique Driftless landscape, and provide new opportunities for local communities and economies.

The Driftless Trail concept has been appropriately scrutinized and warmly received by local officials and key community leaders. After gauging initial community feedback, DALC secured two years of guidance from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to develop the project. Committees and landowners have been actively engaged in thinking the project through. This plan lays that process out, from our vision, mission, and goals to our next steps.

Vision, mission & goals

The process of planning any new recreational trail requires acceptance of a vision and goals that provide direction for the trail development process. The Planning Team, with the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, developed and adopted the vision, goals, and guidelines listed below.

Vision:

Wisconsin's Driftless Trail is a 50-mile footpath which meanders through a mosaic of woodlands, prairies, farmland, rock outcrops and clear streams, all of which have been a place of refuge for humans and wildlife for generations. From the scenic vistas of Blue Mounds through diverse rolling terrain to the Wisconsin River Valley, the trail provides the public an opportunity to explore and connect with the natural and cultural heritage of this unglaciated region. The trail fosters health, strengthens community ties and local businesses, enhances learning, and supports restoration and conservation efforts in this beautiful, nationally significant landscape enjoyed by diverse cultures.

Mission:

To develop and maintain the 50-mile Driftless Trail, a footpath that connects hikers and other nature-seekers to the many outstanding natural, cultural and scenic features that lie within the Driftless hills and hollows between Blue Mound, Governor Dodge, and Tower Hill State Parks.

Goals:

1. Connect people to key natural, cultural and aesthetic features of southwest Wisconsin's Driftless Area.
2. Provide a natural corridor that protects habitat for wildlife and enables their movement.
3. Encourage and help trail users to know, value, enjoy, and protect the Driftless Area and its resources.
4. Provide quiet places for people to nurture connections with the landscape and with each other.
5. Provide a natural place to improve physical and mental health.
6. Provide high quality non-motorized outdoor recreation experiences and facilities, for hiking, trail running, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing.
7. Engage communities and volunteers in design, construction, and on-going maintenance of the trail.
8. Connect with other trails when feasible.
9. Develop the trail as a regional educational and economic resource.

The project area [see maps in Appendix 1-3]

The Driftless Area

Drift is defined as a deposit of clay, sand, gravel, and boulders transported by a glacier or by running water from a glacier. The Driftless Area of Wisconsin is famous the world over because it is completely surrounded by glaciated territory, yet these hills and valleys remained drift-free. It preserves a large sample of what much of northern and eastern United States was like before the Glacial Period.

The Driftless Area covers 16 counties in western and southern Wisconsin, and spills into northern Illinois. (Additional Driftless-like topography extends into Minnesota and Iowa.) **The Driftless Trail project area is in the southeastern third of the Driftless Area**, bounded by the Lower Wisconsin River (north), Military Ridge (south), Dane County (east) and Highway 23 (west).

Natural features and their conservation value

The area's mosaic of ridges and valleys hosts a variety of natural communities, including oak savannas, prairies, Class 1 trout streams, wetlands, pine relicts, floodplain forests, oak forests, and more. Much of the project area is considered to be of exceptional, great, or good conservation value, particularly the state parks, natural areas, and fishery areas, as well as easement properties (see Appendix 4). The entire project area lies within the Dodgeville and Wyoming Oak Woodland/Savanna Conservation Opportunity Area, designated in the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan as being of continental significance ecologically.

Cultural and historic features

The area's rich history is noted by eight historical markers that commemorate events of the Blackhawk War; the influence of the Lloyd-Jones family, including Frank Lloyd Wright; the Old Military Road that was travelled by "a nation on wheels, an empire in the commotion and pangs of birth"; and the transformation of the region's rich lead deposits into ammunition at a shot tower on the Wisconsin River. The trail will connect to cultural sites where appropriate, including sites important to Native peoples, to whom the Driftless region has been "a place of refuge" throughout their history.

Recreational features and existing trails

Iowa County offers many opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized outdoor recreation, but there is nothing similar to the proposed trail. Most existing trails allow multiple uses, for snowmobiles, ATVs, horses, bikes, and cross country skis. The few trails that exist *only* for hiking, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing are in state parks and natural areas, the longest of which is 4.5 miles long.

The popular, multi-use Military Ridge State Trail goes from Madison to Dodgeville, runs just south of Governor Dodge and Blue Mound State Parks, and links with park trails through connecting spurs. The closest stretch of the Ice Age Trail is eight miles west of the project area, in Cross Plains. This 1,000-mile trail is foot-traffic-only except where it intersects with rail-trails and roads.

Iowa County and “trail towns”

The project area is one hour west of Madison and is immediately surrounded by rural communities with populations of 640-7,400 residents. These towns will serve as gateways to the Driftless Trail, and will benefit directly from it. The seven “trail towns” include:

- **Spring Green** (pop. 1,640) – NW portal. Has a well-established tourism economy based on American Players Theater, Taliesin, House on the Rock, and special events.
- **Dodgeville** (pop. 4,750) – SW portal. Close to Governor Dodge State Park, home to Lands’ End, and terminal for the Military Ridge State Trail and the Shake Rag Trail.
- **Ridgeway** (pop. 640) – South central portal. On Military Ridge State Trail. Home to Folklore Village and historic train depot.
- **Barneveld** (pop. 1,240) – SE portal. Historic rail town; home to new, large Vortex Optics headquarters and showroom; on Military Ridge State Trail.
- **Blue Mounds** (pop. 970) – SE portal. Adjacent to Blue Mound State Park, Brigham Park, Pleasure Valley Natural Resource Area, and Cave of the Mounds; on Military Ridge State Trail.
- **Mount Horeb** (pop. 7,420) – SE portal. Bedroom to Madison. Has active Chamber of Commerce, Duluth Trading Co., Driftless Historical Museum & Research Center, Military Ridge State Trail.
- **Arena** (pop. 830) – North portal. Has Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, Arena Cheese Factory, and Peck’s Farm Market. Part of the [Gateway to the Driftless](#) initiative that promotes outdoor recreation opportunities near NW Dane County communities.

Ownership of lands

As it is with all of Wisconsin, around 90% of the project area is privately owned. Among the public properties are significant state-owned conservation lands, including the three parks, Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area, Trout Creek Fishery Area, Love and Strutt Creeks Fishery Area, and the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. Weaving the trail across private and public properties will create the unique character of this trail, and present both opportunities and challenges.

DALC holds easements on 11 properties in the project area, a few of which allow trail development in defined areas. Several large properties are owned by businesses that help define the area, such as Taliesin (Frank Lloyd Wright’s estate), American Players Theater, Peck’s Farm Market, Seven Seeds Farm, House on the Rock, Uplands Cheese Company, and Bethel Horizons retreat center. Several have expressed support for this project.

Other planned trails and initiatives

Several new trails are being planned or constructed just north of the project area, each of which could eventually connect to the Driftless Trail. The new Taliesin Trail, at the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center, traverses the Welsh Hills. Across the Wisconsin River, two footpath loops are planned – the River Valley School Forest Trail and a connected loop in the Riverway on DNR property. Ten miles east of the Driftless Trail, the new multi-use, partially completed Great Sauk Trail will eventually run from Mazomanie to Reedsburg, through the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area and Devil’s Lake State Park.

There is also great potential to expand the Driftless Trail into the rolling grassland region south of Military Ridge. DALC holds several large easements there, and The Nature Conservancy and The Prairie Enthusiasts own and manage large preserves with foot trails through them.

The case for developing the Driftless Trail

Trail Benefits

There are many reasons why creating the Driftless Trail makes sense here and now. Nationwide, trails have proven to be great boons to communities and consistently rank high in surveys asking individuals their most-desired new recreational resources. Trails provide multiple personal, social, ecological, and economic benefits and are key assets for achieving many goals set forth in local and regional plans.

In this case, the Driftless Trail will provide residents and visitors in the northeastern Iowa County with:

1. Increased “quiet trail” access: The trail will provide 50 miles of intimate connections with the Driftless landscape and significantly increase access to “quiet trail” experiences in the region. Research shows that low tech users resent hi-tech users on mixed-use trails, so foot-only trails are more desirable for hikers, runners, cross country skiers, and snowshoers. Few such trails exist in this area, so the Driftless Trail will help meet this demand.
2. Improved physical and mental health: The benefits of exercise and exposure to nature to our physical and mental health are well documented (better health, mood, self-esteem, social connections, empathy, etc.). The beauty of the area and its daily and seasonal changes will calm, invigorate, and restore trail users, adding extra incentive to get outside and get active. Regional medical clinics can incorporate the trail into their health and wellness programs. This trail will meet the needs of most physical abilities for both length and grade.
3. New economic opportunities: One local Chamber of Commerce director noted they are eager to add this type of outdoor recreation opportunity to the area’s list of offerings. We will work with local Chambers, Gateway to the Driftless and Sustainable Driftless marketing collaborations, park friends groups, tourism businesses, and nonprofits to ensure they understand the project, its benefits, and potential users. All area businesses that offer visitor services will benefit.
4. Educational programming opportunities: The trail will be a 50-mile long outdoor classroom with endless programming possibilities for teaching and learning about nature, science, art, writing, agriculture, land management, history, trail building, geo-caching, and more. Local schools, civic and youth groups, home schoolers, and nonprofits should view this as a valuable resource.
5. Increased volunteer opportunities: Volunteers play a vital role in planning, constructing, maintaining, promoting, and fundraising for trails. DALC will promote these opportunities widely and work to maintain a vibrant and active community of trail-focused volunteers.
6. Improved land stewardship and climate resiliency: The Driftless Trail will traverse properties that are mostly owned by people who have some degree of interest in land conservation. The Trail will provide extra incentive to control invasive plants and improve wildlife habitat, creating a corridor of active land and water stewardship that will, as studies have shown, improve the area’s resiliency to climate change over time. Easements will ensure those areas are protected and managed for many years to come.

7. Common ground: The trail will not only help friends and families enjoy time together; it will also provide a nexus for visitors, citizens, businesses, and community groups to work together to build an important resource for all to use, care for, and enjoy.

Consistency with Local, Regional, and Statewide Plans

Driftless Trail partners are eager to help Iowa County, area towns and townships, and regional recreation initiatives achieve their planning goals through this project. The trail aligns well with the findings, goals, and objectives stated in the following plans:

- **Wisconsin DNR's 2018 Recreational Opportunities Analysis** (published in March 2018 to serve as basis for Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2022)
 - a. The 10-county Southern Gateways Region includes Iowa County; survey results are based on comments from 3,700 people in this region
 - b. Factors important in determining favorite places to visit are (1) the quality of trails [top priority for 65%]; (2) the desire to be in a quiet place; (3) good maps, signs or information about the property; and (4) the quality of the habitat.
 - c. Favorite parks are Devil's Lake, Governor Dodge, and Blue Mound
 - d. Favorite trails are Ice Age Trail, Glacial Drumlin State Trail, and Military Ridge State Trail
 - e. Favorite activities are (1) hiking, walking, and running on trails; (2) canoeing/kayaking
 - f. 73% believe more recreational opportunities are needed in the region, with top choices: (1) trails for motorized recreation, (2) trails for hiking/walking/running
 - g. Desire for more local hiking/walking/running trails among Southern Gateways Region residents is higher than statewide average
- **Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's *Grow Southwest Wisconsin* plan (2013)**
 - a. Develop health and wellness incentives and programs
 - b. Develop numerous outdoor recreational opportunities and venues
 - c. Increase conservation, preservation, and land management efforts
 - d. Increase natural resource and environmental education
 - e. Market, brand, and promote the region
 - f. Increase access to recreational lands, both public and private
 - g. provide strategic focus for land and water conservation efforts
 - h. make land conservation and natural resources more accessible
 - i. identify new opportunities for community engagement and partnerships
- **Iowa County Comprehensive Plan**

The Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element of this plan (Section E) contains many statements and definitions that are in lock-step with the goals of the Driftless Trail and should be used in communications related to this project. Applicable goals & objectives include:

 - a. To protect the natural environment, cultural and historic resources while preserving the character of the area, it is crucial to be informed about the existing resources.
 - b. Natural resources of concern are water, topography, geology, forest/woodlands, wildlife, parks, open space, air, and light.

- c. Cultural resources of concern are historic buildings, museums, landmarks, cemeteries, churches, and rural schools.
 - d. Routinely remind residents of the importance of their agricultural, natural, and cultural resources and the need for continued protection of local open spaces to provide recreational opportunities.
 - e. Build partnerships with local organizations in order to protect important natural areas.
 - f. Encourage and support prairie and savanna restoration.
 - g. Enforce noxious weed control ordinances.
 - h. Support tree preservation and sustainable forestry practices.
 - i. Establish more parks and outdoor recreational amenities.
 - j. Promote tourism opportunities and pursue efforts to capitalize on local resources in conjunction with walking tour programs, the Wisconsin Historical Markers Program, maintaining trails, and preserving the natural beauty of the area.
 - k. Utilize state and federal programs that provide assistance for achieving these goals.
- **Master plans for Governor Dodge, Tower Hill, and Blue Mound State Parks**
The next master plan updates will include opportunities to connect with adjacent trails, including the Driftless Trail.
 - **WI Dept. of Natural Resources *Land Legacy Report (2004)* & *Wildlife Action Plan (2008)***
The Wisconsin Land Legacy Report identifies places that the public and DNR staff believe to be most important in meeting the public's conservation and recreation needs through the year 2050. The report identifies the Lower Wisconsin River and the Mill Creek corridor (from Governor Dodge State Park to the Wisconsin River at Tower Hill State Park) as high priorities.

The Driftless Trail project area includes two Conservation Opportunity Areas identified in the *Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan*: Lower Wisconsin Bluffs and Floodplain COA and Dodgeville Wyoming Oak Woodlands & Savanna COA. Both are of continental significance.

- **Comprehensive Plans for townships in project area**
The City of Dodgeville and Wyoming, Arena, Dodgeville, Ridgeway, and Brigham townships have developed comprehensive (Smart Growth) plans that value a long-range, regional focus. Their visions and goals aim to protect and enhance rural character, agricultural opportunities, the environment, natural beauty, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, rights of landowners and residents, community safety, economic development, and cooperation with local, regional, and state entities. The Driftless Trail will help advance nearly all of these goals.
- **Master Plan for Lower Wisconsin State Riverway**
Included in the 2016 Master Plan for the Riverway is a goal to provide opportunities for high-quality, nature-based, open-space recreational uses that are compatible with the property's ecological and habitat management goals. Hiking, camping, and environmental education are listed as compatible uses. It also states a desire to create a through-hiking trail from the Mississippi to Sauk City, and to support public and private efforts to create segments of that trail. The northern portion of our project area lies within the Riverway boundary, and the Driftless Trail fits the Plan's criteria for primitive or lightly developed hiking trails.

A successful model: The Ice Age Trail

Given the similarities and proximity between the Driftless Trail and the 60 year-old Ice Age Trail, we have learned a great deal from the Ice Age Trail Alliance's experience. IATA staff have generously shared their time and assistance. The quality, success, and popularity of the Ice Age Trail provides invaluable motivation and information that will help guide this project. For example, in 2012 they conducted a comprehensive survey to analyze the Ice Age Trail and found that the trail *adds \$113 million to state economy annually*.

Guidelines and general trail considerations

1. The trail will be designed to allow hiking, walking, running, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing only. Any exceptions would occur only if we incorporate portions of trails that already exist and are constructed to withstand multi-use impacts--such as rail-to-trail segments.
2. The preferred trail route will:
 - a. **pass through the most scenic, feasible terrain;**
 - b. **connect scenic highlights** such as long vistas, points of interest, ecologically restored areas, and historically interesting sites;
 - c. **incorporate existing recreation features**, such as connections to parks and other trails;
 - d. **take a long-term approach** vs. an immediate approach – i.e., select the highest quality route vs. going for a fast but less significant route, using temporary bypass routes where needed;
 - e. **pass through generally natural and rural areas**, with spurs into communities where needed;
 - f. **avoid wet areas** and design the trail for keeping boots generally dry;
 - g. **not follow a road**, but use roads temporarily to fill gaps between trail segments; and
 - h. **utilize public lands, larger tracts of private lands, and conservation easement lands** to minimize the number of potential conflicts and contacts.
3. Design features will:
 - a. **discourage unwanted uses** (mountain bikes, horses, ATVs, dirt bikes, snowmobiles);
 - b. **provide periodic hiker amenities** – camping areas, drinking water, access points with parking, wayfinding signage, interpretive signage, and intermittent re-supply opportunities;
 - c. **meet well-established specifications**, such as
 - i. a grade of 10% or less, with a maximum grade of 20% for 100 feet
 - ii. a 24-30 inch smooth tread width and a tread outslope of 5%
 - iii. a clearing width of 4 feet (minimum) and clearing height of 8 feet
 - iv. a surface consisting primarily of native soil
 - v. no stumps or boulders immediately adjacent to the tread
 - vi. sidehill tread backslopes that are <1:1, mimicking the slope of the sidehill when possible
 - d. **ensure mowing the trail will be feasible** with a walk-behind brush hog.
4. The preferred route and design measures will **provide for minimum maintenance needs**.
5. The planning process will:
 - a. **identify local managing authorities (volunteers)** who will build, manage and maintain various segments;

- b. **identify a legally defensible location for the trail** that meets requirements of the National Environmental Protection Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and Wisconsin DNR environmental requirements that may apply to this project; and
 - c. **develop a broad base of community awareness and local support** for the trail.
6. The initial budget for the project is estimated at \$25-30,000/mile based on the average cost of constructing 60 segments of the Ice Age Trail, a similar footpath, over eight years. This includes planning costs and the value of volunteer hours, but not the cost of easements.

Progress to date: findings and accomplishments

Two years since the Driftless Trail idea was first floated, the project has become a well-organized effort with overall positive support. People generally feel a 50 mile trail is achievable, with many models to learn from and a small group of creative and motivated people to make it happen.

The Planning Team is the small group driving this project. They have met monthly to pull together elements of the Concept Plan, including the process for developing the trail. And they will lead efforts to raise money, contact landowners, design the trail, facilitate construction, and keep the community informed and engaged.

The Advisory Team met in late January 2018 to learn about the project and provide initial feedback, which was very positive. In February, members of this committee attended a mapping session for plotting the cultural, natural, and scenic assets of the area. This team will meet as needed, receive quarterly updates, and be called on individually when their particular expertise is needed.

Many other people are on our **Keep Informed List**. They are interested in the project but are not able to get more involved at this time. They also receive quarterly project updates.

Landowner meetings and feedback

The Planning Team hosted two meetings in June 2018 to inform landowners in the project area about the Driftless Trail idea and to solicit their feedback. Invitations emphasized that this grassroots project cannot happen without landowner input and support. Twenty individuals attended. They were generally enthusiastic, asked good questions, expressed valid concerns, and offered both ideas and help.

Here are the main take-aways from the landowner meetings:

1. Major concerns are liability, easements, hunting, privacy, trespassing, and cost.
2. Important points to emphasize when presenting the project to landowners:
 - a. this is a voluntary project and there will be no use of eminent domain.
 - b. Wisconsin's Recreational Use Statute limits the injury liability of private landowners.
 - c. Many landowners *like* having a public-access trail on their land because trail users help to monitor and manage their property and some find it improves deer hunting as hikers prompt deer to move around the property.
3. Provide guidance for how hunting and trail use can safely co-exist on properties.
4. Involve small groups of landowners in planning the trail route and placement.
5. Identify trail nodes/access points early on.
6. Engage and inform large landowners even if they do not want the trail on their land.

7. “Stay on trail” signs work, trail cams do not (for security and privacy purposes).
8. Most users like 1-2 hour long hikes – loops or road-to-road – so design accordingly.
9. Starting with a prototype trail is important.
10. Focus energy on clusters of willing landowners.
11. Design outreach materials carefully. Ice Age Trail will share their documents with us.
12. Develop a program similar to Ice Age Trail Alliance’s *Trail Communities* program, adapted from the national *Trail Towns* program. Gateway communities pay a one-time fee to become part of the long-term, collective signage and marketing for the trail.

Next Steps

Following are the next steps for developing the Driftless Trail:

- 1. Complete assessments** of landowner interest, donor interest, and potential demand for this trail. Develop Concept Plan, project summary hand-out, preliminary budget, and survey questions for use in assessments. [October 2018 – March 2019]
- 2. Determine status and form of project based on assessments.** [April]
- 3. If project is to proceed, develop an Action Plan with these components:** [May]
 - a. Budget, cost estimates for whole trail and prototype trail(s)
 - b. Fundraising plan (raise most of the needed funds within seven years)
 - c. Volunteer opportunities (planning, fundraising, construction, marketing, programs, etc.)
 - d. Key partners and stakeholders (agencies, community groups, landowners, trail towns, etc.)
 - e. Maps: (1) corridor and route; (2) natural, cultural, and scenic resources; (3) public map
 - f. Landowner engagement (communications, easements, liability, FAQs, record-keeping, etc)
 - g. Public outreach (print, media, web, presentations, etc.)
 - h. Project coordination (Trail Coordinator, planners, advisors, capital campaign director, etc.)
 - i. Trail lay-out and design
 - a. General alignment, future connections
 - b. access points, trailheads, parking, signage,
 - c. amenities -- camping areas, drinking water, etc.
 - j. Construction (volunteers, contractors as needed)
 - k. Maintenance and management (trail support network, easement monitoring, etc.)
 - l. Programming (events, outreach, education, target audiences)
 - m. Timeline (likely 15 years)
- 4. Secure funding** for project planning and trail construction [on-going]

Project partners

From the beginning of the planning process in 2016, the Driftless Trail has been multi-partner effort, drawing on trail experts outside the area and key community members within the project area. In 2017, a project coordinator was contracted and the Planning Team and Advisory Team were created.

Planning Team

Barb Barzen	Driftless Area Land Conservancy (project coordinator)
Dennis Boyer	Landowner, writer
David Clutter	Driftless Area Land Conservancy (executive director)
Christina Harrington	Taliesin Preservation, Inc.
Mark Hirsch	Driftless Area Land Conservancy (board member)
Dave Mickelson	UW-Madison Geology Department (retired)
Angie Tornes	National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

Advisory Team

Katie Abbott	Iowa County Land Conservation Department
Amy Alstad	Driftless Area Land Conservancy
Jeremy Batson	Spring Green School Forest Trail
Eric Carson	UWEX – Wisconsin Geologic and Natural History Survey
Kim Cates	Cates Family Farm
Mark Cupp	Lower Wisconsin Riverway Board
Mike Degen	Taliesin Preservation, Inc.
Sue Donaldson	House on the Rock Resort and Attraction
Scott Godfrey	Iowa County Planning
Don Greenwood	community activist, Spring Green
Kathy Gruentzel	WI Dept. of Natural Resources (manages three state parks in project area)
Drew Hanson	consultant, formerly with Ice Age Trail Alliance
Jane Hauser	community activist, Spring Green School Forest Trail
Brad Hutnik	WI Dept. of Natural Resources, forester
John Kivikoski	Ecological Woodland Management
Troy Maggied	Southwest WI Regional Planning Commission
Denise Marino	Landowner
Linda Marquardt	Landowner
Bill Menke	North Country Trail Association
Todd Novak	Mayor of Dodgeville; State Representative
Herb Paaren	Landowner
James Radtke	Principal, River Valley Middle School
Nathan Schulfer	Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
Wayne Schutte	Retired Lower Wisconsin Riverway manager, WI Dept. of Natural Resources
Brian Simmert	Sauk County trails coordinator
Kris Stoddard	Spring Green Chamber of Commerce
Kevin Thusius	Ice Age Trail Alliance
Mike Van Sicklen	Driftless Area Land Conservancy (chair, board of directors)
Gary Werner	Partners for the National Trails System
Ann Zimrin	Butler Family Farm
Timm Zumm	Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway

Driftless Area Land Conservancy

The Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) was established in 2001. It is an accredited land trust whose mission is to maintain and enhance the health, diversity and beauty of Southwest Wisconsin's natural and agricultural landscape through permanent land protection and restoration, and improve people's lives by connecting them to the land and to each other. DALC is based in Dodgeville and board members live throughout the four counties we serve -- Richland, Sauk, Iowa, and Lafayette.

To most effectively protect the farms, forests, grasslands, wetlands, soils and the natural beauty of the region, DALC worked with a team of ecologists to identify priority conservation areas within large, undivided blocks of land in our service area. While we remain active throughout our region as funding and landowner interest allow, we work diligently to preserve these focus areas.

Our most effective tool for protecting land long-term is a conservation easement -- a legal agreement between a landowner and DALC that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. The landowner continues to own and use their land and can sell it or pass it on to heirs while protecting its important natural and cultural features. They give up some rights associated with the land, such as building additional structures, while retaining other rights, such as growing crops. Future owners will be bound by terms of the easement, which DALC monitors annually.

DALC education programs aim to expose kids to the beauty and diversity that nature provides, and create a comfort and connection to the outdoors that lasts a lifetime. We use properties we own and hold easements for as outdoor classrooms for youth education programming, as well as adult education programming geared toward land stewardship.

National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

This program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the country through their national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals. They design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities.

Links to project partners and planning documents

Partner organizations

[Driftless Area Land Conservancy](http://driftlessconservancy.org) (driftlessconservancy.org)

[Taliesin Preservation](http://taliesinpreservation.org) (taliesinpreservation.org)

[National Park Service Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance Program](http://nps.gov/orgs/rtca) (nps.gov/orgs/rtca)

[Ice Age Trail Alliance](http://iceagetrail.org) (iceagetrail.org)

[North Country Trail Association](http://northcountrytrail.org/trail/Wisconsin) (northcountrytrail.org/trail/Wisconsin)

Local, regional, and state planning documents

Iowa County Comprehensive Plan – [Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element](#)

Wisconsin DNR 2018 Recreation Opportunities Analysis – [Southern Gateways Region](#)

Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission – [Grow Southwest Wisconsin \(2013\)](#)

[Town of Arena comprehensive plan](#)

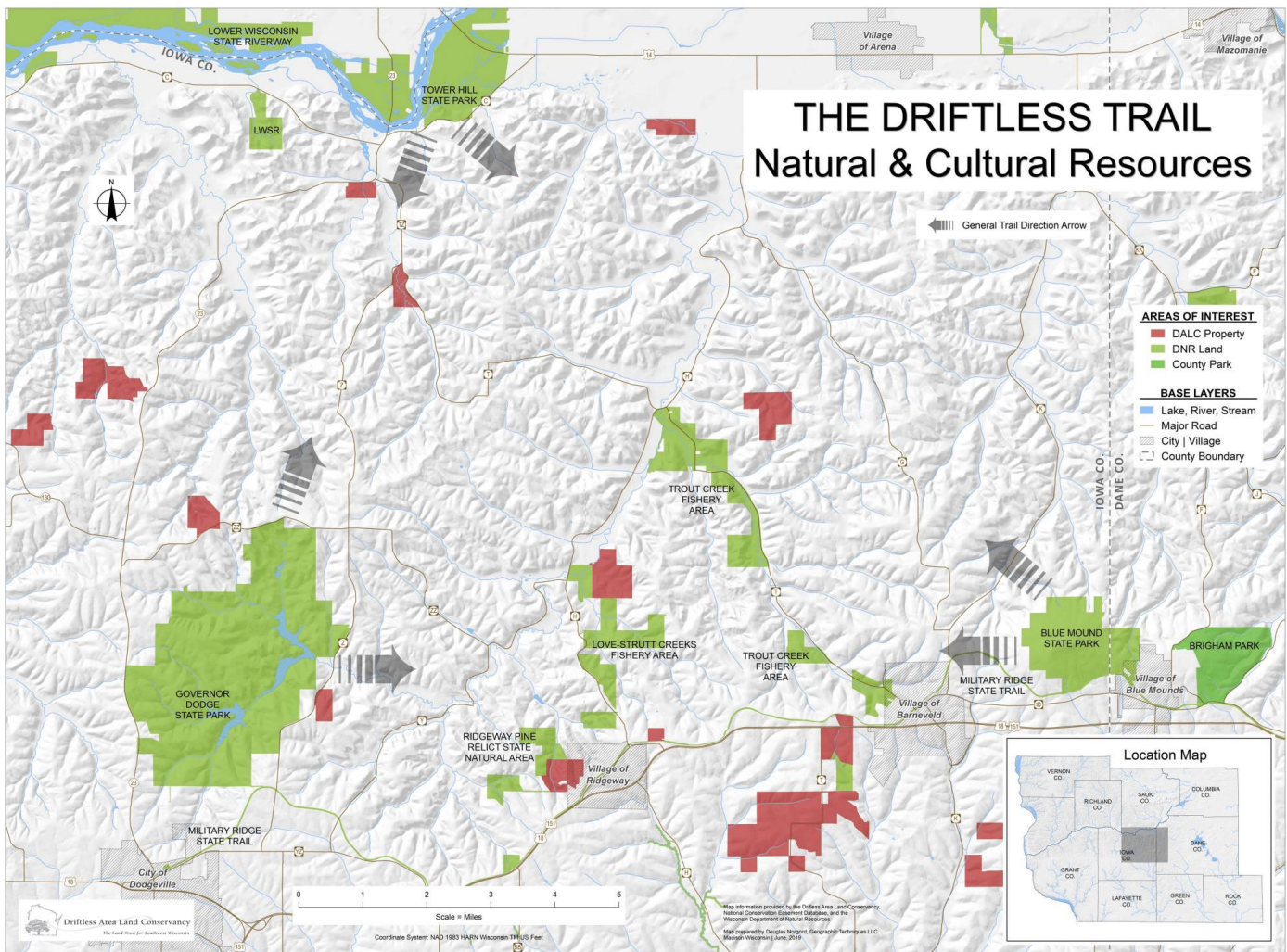
[Town of Brigham comprehensive plan](#)

[Town of Dodgeville comprehensive plan](#)

[Town of Ridgeway comprehensive plan](#)

[Town of Wyoming comprehensive plan](#)

Appendix 1: Map of project area



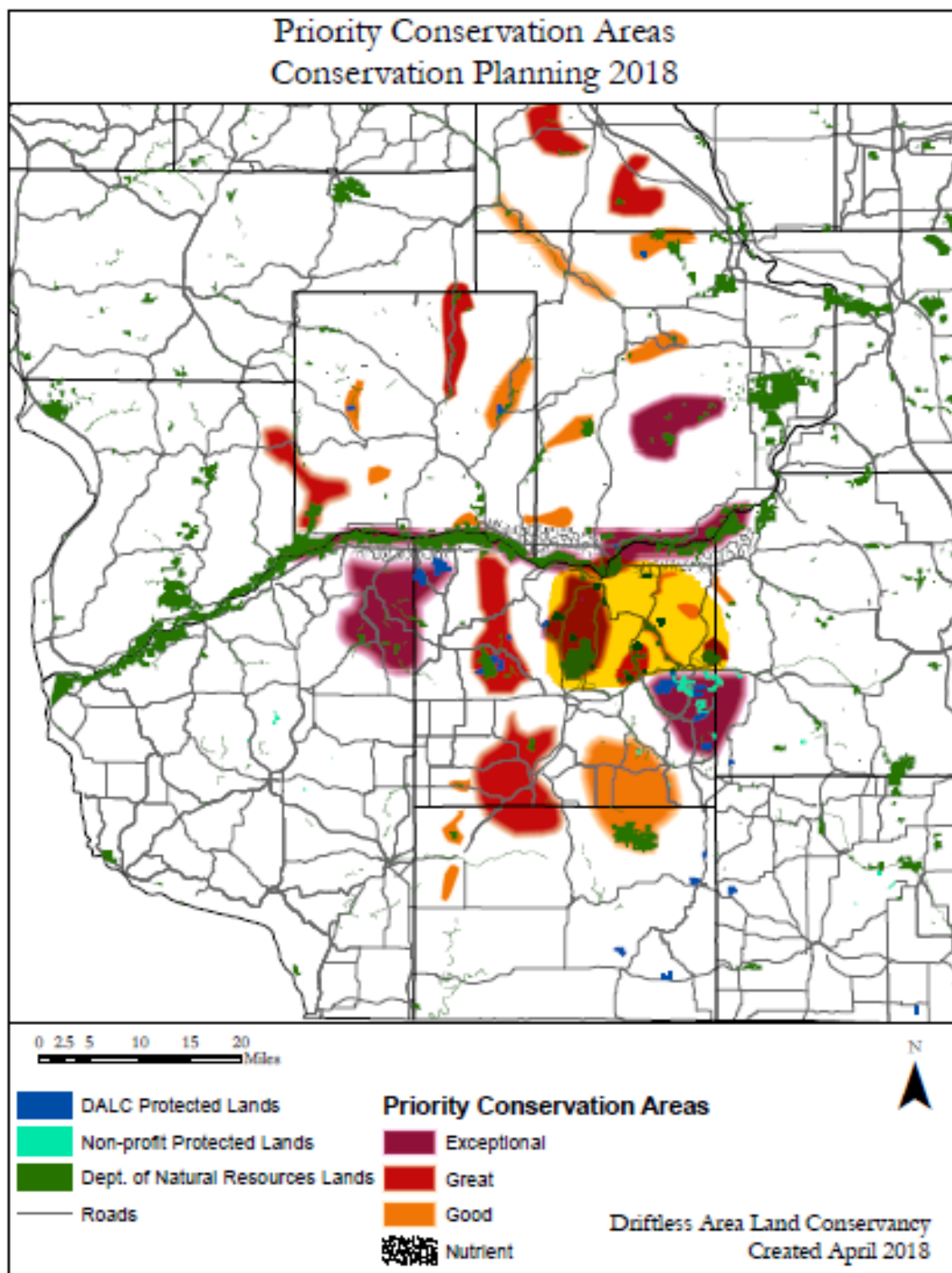
Driftless Trail Project Area:

The large arrows show the general direction/route the trail will go in, but the trail will ultimately be a network of segments and loops that will allow for a 50+ mile hike through primarily private lands, including DALC easement properties (in red), as well as these state properties:

1. Tower Hill State Park
2. Governor Dodge State Park
3. Blue Mound State Park
4. Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area
5. Trout Creek Fishery Area
6. Love-Strutt Creeks Fishery Area

Appendix 2: Map of conservation planning for DALC service area

The Driftless Trail project area, shaded in yellow, includes areas of exceptional and great conservation value, according to long-time state ecologist Randy Hoffman, who conducted conservation planning for DALC in 2018.



Appendix 3: Map of cultural and scenic resources in project area

This map shows some of the cultural and scenic resources in the area that the Driftless Trail could potentially connect to. Areas in red are DALC easement properties.

