

Trail Plan

Hoosier National Forest

April 20, 2007

Abstract: This document serves to guide the future of the trail program on the Hoosier National Forest.

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Background

This document is a development and implementation plan for the trail program on the Hoosier National Forest. It updates the previous plans of August 3, 1995, December 12, 1997, and April 8, 2002. The purpose of this document is to provide specific direction and policy for the implementation of the trail program and supports the general guidance found in the Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA Forest Service 2006).

Special Note: It is emphasized that this is *not* a decision document in the context of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and represents no commitment on the part of the Forest Service to implement any trail proposals appearing herein. This program will be implemented to the extent that resources allow. The reader is cautioned that outside influences such as funding, staffing, and environmental factors may at times affect the Forest's ability to implement the program. New trails listed in Appendix A must each be analyzed on their own merit, and will be subject to review required by the NEPA. They may or may not be implemented.

This program represents the results of over fifteen years of ongoing contact with the public concerning the use of trails on the Hoosier National Forest. The 1995 edition of this plan was written after an extensive public involvement effort that occurred from February 1992 through March 1994. Two citizen's task forces made recommendations that were presented to the public for additional comment through mailings and open houses. The 1991 Forest Plan was amended in June 1994 to reflect this new guidance. Over the years Forest managers continued to meet with user groups, sponsored open houses, and in the fall of 2000 sponsored a series of trails workshops for the public and Hoosier National Forest staff. Based on input from those workshops and ongoing public contact, the Forest developed the 2002 Trail Plan. Further public input was obtained during the recent Forest Plan revision process. The Forest Plan was completed in 2006 and includes general trail guidance. This plan provides more specific direction.

Numerous sources were consulted to develop a plan that provides for efficient use of tax dollars, responds to demand, and protects forest resources. These sources include: The Indiana State Trails, Greenways and Bikeways Plan (Indiana Department of Natural Resources 2006), State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (Indiana Department of Natural Resources 2000), A Social Assessment of the Hoosier National Forest (Welch *et al.* 2001), National Visitor Use Monitoring Results (USDA Forest Service 2004), Research for the Development of Best Management Practices to Minimize Horse Trail Impacts on the Hoosier National Forest (Aust *et al.* 2005), two Rapid Assessment Visitor Inventories (Chilman 2005 and Chilman 2006), and trail use and permit summaries compiled by Hoosier National Forest staff over the last five years (Stewart 2006a, Stewart 2006b, and USDA Forest Service 2001-2006).

The long term future view of the trail program is a trail system very similar in mileage to what we have today. The quality of the trail experience would be high with minimal resource damage from eroded or muddy trails. Shared use would remain for much of the trail system, but more single use hiking trails would be available. Additional multiple use

trails would only be added if more land were to be acquired, and if budgets were adequate to sustain a larger system.

Trail Policy

General

The goal of the Hoosier National Forest trail program is two fold: 1. provide quality and safe trail opportunities year around to as many users as possible, and 2. adequately protect Forest resources while providing these opportunities. To meet these goals under current conditions, the Hoosier National Forest is not seeking to construct extensive new multiple use trail systems.

Use Type

The Hoosier National Forest will continue to provide the greatest number of trail miles to the most user groups by allowing the majority of existing trails to be used together by hikers, horse riders, and mountain bikers. The prohibition on off road vehicle use remains. All designations for the type of use allowed on trails will remain the same as currently specified (See Appendix F).

Monitoring and inspections

A formal and detailed monitoring effort occurs through the Forest Service inventory control system known as INFRA. This program requires that 2% of the trails be monitored every year; sampling sites are determined at random and use a national standardized monitoring format.

As resources allow, all trails receive an informal inspection once annually and after major storm events. A suggested checklist is provided in Appendix B.

Trail use is monitored as resources allow. Options include trail counters, parking lot counts, and record keeping of visual observations by Forest staff.

The Forest soil scientist may randomly select trails for annual monitoring.

Public comments regarding trails are recorded and reviewed by Forest staff. Comments are obtained from phone calls, public meetings, and customer comment cards.

Results from monitoring are reported in the Hoosier National Forest Monitoring Report.

Maintenance

Maintenance is performed based on the results of the monitoring effort.

Minor maintenance includes clearing blowdowns, brushing, cleaning or replacing drainage control structures, marker replacement, spot gravelling, and litter removal.

Heavy maintenance includes the use of construction equipment to install or reshape drainage devices, establishing the trail tread, and installing gravel. (Mechanical equipment is not allowed in the Charles C. Deam Wilderness in which case hand crews or stock are used). The grade of gravel used is the finest mix possible that will withstand the expected use and slope, generally grade 73 or finer.

Construction

New trail construction consists of the following steps: inclusion in this trail document, environmental analysis, funding, layout and design, and construction.

Standards

Trails will be constructed and maintained per direction found in Forest Service Handbook 2309.18 (USDA Forest Service 1991). The Forest Service is in the process of revising that handbook which will apply nationally. The revised version will likely require that each trail be identified by level of development known as a Trail Class. The Trail Class in turn specifies standards for that particular level of development. The INFRA inventory program mentioned above already includes class determination and uses the same definitions that would be used in the revised handbook. A list of Hoosier National Forest trails and the class determinations as currently used in INFRA can be found in Appendix C and definitions may be found in Appendix D. A copy of the proposed handbook and trail classes may be found online at http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/trails_class.pdf or a hardcopy may be requested from this office.

Marking

Currently a variety of systems are in place and include the following: brown plastic posts with decals, colored plastic discs and diamonds on trees, colored stenciled blazes on trees, or wooden routed signs. The Forest will move to the following system for consistency as resources allow:

Non-wilderness trail markers:

- * Use stenciled blazes on trees as reassurance markers, and color-coded for use type.
- * Use plastic posts or signs with arrow decals at intersections, points of confusion, or where trees are unavailable.
- * At major entry points to a multiple trail system, use the yield courtesy sign and plastic post with decals indicating type of use allowed on that trail.
- * As resources allow, use “you are here” maps at intersections and entry points. Trails may be numbered and or named.

* Color coding for non-wilderness trails:

Bike/hike/horse	blue
Horse/hike	red
Bike/hike	yellow
Hike	white
Connectors	orange (a connector trail is a short segment within a loop)

Wilderness trail markers:

- * Use wooden routed signs at entry points and points of confusion.
- * Trails may be numbered and or named.

Information

The public is made aware of trail opportunities through Recreation Opportunity Guides (ROGs), the Forest web site, and a commercially available trails map.

As resources allow, at least one trailhead on each trail contains a bulletin board with the following information: rules and regulations, the location and number of the nearest emergency phone, a trail ROG showing the map, information about the recreation fee program, and other user ethics messages. ROGs may be dispensed.

Directional signs from major highways to trailheads are in place where possible. The Forest will continue to work to improve signage to trailheads.

Regulations

The following summarizes current regulations regarding trail use:

Horses and bicycles must stay on designated trails. Hikers may hike anywhere.

Horses are not allowed in trailheads for trails that do not allow horses. Bicycles are allowed in any trailhead, but may not use the trail itself if it is not designated for bicycle use.

Other means of transport such as wagons, buggies, and motorized vehicles are not allowed on trails or any National Forest System (NFS) lands except on legal roads.

Horse and bike riders 17 years of age or older must purchase a trail permit under the provisions of the recreation fee program. The Hardin Ridge Trail and the portion of the Brown County D Trail on NFS land are exempt from this requirement.

Trailheads

Trailheads generally consist of a graveled lot, sign, and bulletin board.

Five horsecamps (Blackwell, Hickory Ridge, Shirley Creek, Youngs Creek, and German Ridge) also double as trailheads and provide day use parking for any user type allowed on that trail. At German Ridge, the day use parking area is provided in an area separate from the campground.

Trailheads that are not horsecamps generally do not provide restrooms or trash receptacles.

Documentation

Trails are included in the USDA Forest Service's inventory control system known as INFRA. Costs, past work, structures such as culverts, and future needs are identified by trail number and mile post.

All trail routes are mapped with global positioning system (GPS). Distances have been determined using a measuring wheel or all terrain vehicle (ATV) odometer. That method has been determined to be more accurate than GPS when determining distances.

Use of Roads

Public roads are not considered part of the trail system. A public road is a road officially open and passable by licensed "street legal" vehicles. At their own discretion, and within local laws, users may make their own connections between trails using such roads as a link.

Cross-Forest Trails

Two opportunities exist for trails that cross the Hoosier National Forest: the cross-country American Discovery Trail (ADT) and the cross-state Knobstone Trail.

The Forest has cooperated with the ADT and has allowed marking on Mogan Ridge East and West, Tipsaw, Two Lakes Loop trails, and connectors on old roads. Users of the ADT must comply with the use type of the particular trail segment they are using. Most of the ADT that is within the Hoosier National Forest purchase boundaries is routed on roads. ADT volunteers are responsible for marking. ADT volunteers are required to obtain permission before marking or completing work on NFS lands.

The Knobstone Trail is administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and currently ends south of NFS land near Brownstown, IN. The Forest will attempt to identify a route across the Forest for this trail if and when the Department of Natural Resources is able to acquire property or right-of-ways that would enable the trail to reach NFS lands. It is expected that the Forest would use the existing routes for the Nebo, Fork Ridge, and D Trails, with a possible tie in to the Department of Natural Resources' Tecumseh Trail to the north.

Other cross-forest trails proposed by other government agencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Trails in Special Areas

A “special area” is an area with unique value and is identified in the Forest Plan. Forest Plan guidance states that trails and other developments in special areas must be consistent with protecting the unique values for which the area was designated. Management plans are developed for each special area, and determine which types of uses are acceptable. If a management plan for a particular special area allows trails, they may be considered. Some areas do not yet have plans completed. In those cases no trails will be considered until the management plan is completed and trails are found to be acceptable.

Special Use Permits

General. The Forest will no longer issue SUPs (Special Use Permit) for access trails for commercial camps, groups and clubs, and individuals. However, permits for other activities involving trails may be issued as described below. A fee may be charged for permits and may include a cost recovery for administrative costs. There are three situations in which special use permits may be issued for actions related to trails:

1. **Outfitter Guide.** Individuals or camps that wish to charge a fee to rent gear or animals or guide trail users must apply for outfitter/guide permit. Adjacent camps **do not** need to apply for an outfitter guide permit unless they will rent gear or animals, or guide trail users. Outfitter guide permits are administered under Forest Service national guidelines for the outfitter and guide program. No outfitter guide permits are allowed in the Charles C. Deam Wilderness per Forest Plan guidance.
2. **Right-of-way or easement request.** There may be times when an applicant may request that a trail cross NFS land, but not connect to a designated trail. Those requests will be handled on a case by case basis in the same manner as similar requests for road and utility right-of-ways.
3. **Special event.** Groups or individuals may apply for the use of a trail for a special event, such as an endurance ride or mountain bike race. These permits are administered under Forest Service national guidelines for recreation or group events. If the event includes horse or bike use, trail tags are also required.

Status of existing SUP trails for commercial camps. Existing commercial camps with SUP trails will retain those trails as initially permitted. If the camp is sold, the new owner may apply for a permit, and if all requirements are met a new permit would be issued. If the permit is not renewed when it expires, or reapplied for upon transfer of ownership, it will not be eligible for reinstatement at a later time.

Status of existing SUP trails for individual landowners and clubs. Existing permits in this category will remain in effect. If the property is sold, the new owner may apply for a

permit, and if all requirements are met a new permit would be issued. If the permit is not renewed when it expires, or reapplied for upon transfer of ownership, it will not be eligible for reinstatement at a later time. These permits may not be converted to commercial operation.

Status of pending SUP applications. There was one application pending prior to the development of this policy. The analysis for that application has been completed the permit is expected to be issued in summer 2007.

Implementation of Possible Trail Projects

The Forest has identified possible trail projects for the next five years and these are displayed in Appendix A. These projects may or may not be implemented subject to constraints such as funding, staffing, and the results of environmental analysis that may be required.

USDA Forest Service Participants

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B.S. Recreation, Indiana University, 1973

M.S. Recreation Resource Management, Slippery Rock University, 1983

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Continuing Education Courses, California State University, Sacramento, Colorado State University, and Indiana University

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Appendix A
Implementation Schedule of Possible Projects

Project	Target Fiscal Year	Gain or loss of miles (approx)	Status/notes
D Trail reroute	FY 07	+0.12	Under construction as of April 2007
Build connector route to make a loop within Youngs Creek Trail	FY 07	+0.75 multiple use	Holdover from 2002 Trail Plan, analysis underway as of April 2007
Add undocumented trail segments for American Discovery Trail	FY07	+ 1.8 hiking	These segments currently exist on abandoned roads and are open to use, but need to be added to the official trail inventory.
Add undocumented trail segment for old German Ridge loop road	FY07	+ 0.9 hiking	
Add undocumented trail segment for north part of Pioneer Mothers	FY07	+ 0.5 hiking	
Close Ogala Trail	FY 07	-6.0 multiple use	Trail in poor condition with excessive erosion, low use, needs parking, would require extensive relocation. Soil restoration to occur as future project.
Close Ohio River segment of German Ridge Trail	FY 07	-2.0* multiple use	Trail in poor condition from very severe erosion, safety concerns from erosion, low use, not connected to German Ridge Trail, no trailhead. Soil restoration to occur as future project.
Close north-south spur trail on Oriole East	FY 07	- 2.3	Trail in poor condition with excessive erosion, low use, dead end route. Soil restoration to occur as future project. Replacement route may be considered if a feasible route is found and if funding is available.
Complete loop and add trailhead on Hickory Ridge Trail north of Hickory Ridge Trail #16	FY 08	+2.0 multiple use	Now possible due to recent land purchase
Build connectors or extensions if future land purchases provide a feasible opportunity	FY 08-12	Variable	

Project	Target Fiscal Year	Gain or loss of miles (approx)	Status/notes
Reroutes as needed	FY 08-12	Variable	As determined by monitoring
Knobstone Trail	Unknown	Variable	To be considered when IDNR determines route and acquires land

* Due to an oversight this mileage was never included in the German Ridge Trail mileage total. After closure the German Ridge Trail mileage will remain at 24.

Appendix B Suggested Trail Inspection Checklist

Trail name	
Segment	
Date	
Inspector	
Checklist:	Observations and recommended action:
Brushing adequate?	
Mowing adequate?	
Obstructions or blowdowns?	
Markers present and intact?	
Tread condition?	
Water draining properly?	
Stream crossings impacted?	
Illegal activity?	
Litter?	
Safety hazards?	
Other	

Appendix C Trail Class Designation

Trail	Class
Birdseye	4
Brown County D	4
Buzzard Roost	3
Celina Interpretive	3
Fork Ridge	3
German Ridge	4
German Ridge Hiking	3
Hardin Ridge	4
Hemlock Cliffs	3
Hickory Ridge	4
Nebo Ridge	4
Lick Creek	4
Mogan West	4
Mogan East	3
Oriole East	4
Oriole West	4
Pate Hollow	3
Pioneer Mothers	3
Shirley Creek	4
Springs Valley	4
Saddle Lake	3
Tipsaw	4
Twin Oaks Interpretive	3
Two Lakes	3
Deam Wilderness West	3
Deam Wilderness Sycamore	3
Youngs Creek	4

Appendix D
Trail Class Definitions

Trail Class	Definition	Number of Trails in Class	Number of Miles in Class
Trail Class 1	minimal/undeveloped	0	0
Trail Class 2	simple/minor development	0	0
Trail Class 3	developed/improved	13	75.9
Trail Class 4	highly developed	15	184.8
Trail Class 5	fully developed	0	0
Total		28	260.7

Appendix E Trail Summary

Mgt Area	2.4	2.8	3.3	5.1	6.2	6.4	7.1	8.1	8.2	8.3	Total Miles	Use Type
Trail:												
ADTconnectors			1.0				.5				1.8	Hike
Birdseye			11.8								11.8	Multiple
Brown Co D					2.1						2.1	Horse/hike
Buzzard Roos							0.8				0.8	Hike
Celina Interp							0.8				0.8	Hike
Fork Ridge		3.5									3.5	Hike
German R		24									24	Multiple
Germ R Hike							2.4				2.4	Hike
Hardin Ridge							2				2	Hike/bike
Hemlock Cliff									1.0		1.0	Hike
Hickory Ridge		34.1				12.6					46.7	Multiple
Nebo Ridge					8.6						8.6	Multiple
Lick Creek					7.2				.5		7.7	Multiple
Mogan West						12.3					12.3	Multiple
Mogan East									6.9		6.9	Hike
Oriole East	1	5.5									6.5	Multiple u
Oriole West					7.2						7.2	Multiple
Pate Hollow	7.7										7.7	Hike
Pioneer Mom								1.3			1.3	Hike
Shirley Creek						19.4					19.4	Multiple
Springs Valle		4.3					8.4				12.7	Multiple
Saddle Lake							2.2				2.2	Hike
Tipsaw							5.9				5.9	Hike/bike
Twin Oaks Int							1.4				1.4	Hike
Two Lakes			8.2				7.5				15.7	Hike
Deam West				32.4							31.4	Hike
Deam Sycam				4.9							4.9	Hike/horse
Youngs Cr		11.0									11.0	Multiple
Flynn SUP						0.6					0.6	Multiple
MTR SUP						7.2					7.2	Multiple
SIH SUP		4				2.5					6.5	Multiple
Manes SUP		0.1									0.1	Multiple
Murphy SUP						0.1					0.1	Multiple
MidAme SUP		0.3									0.3	Multiple
Hildebra SUP		0.4									0.4	Multiple
Bonds SUP		0.8									0.8	Multiple
Ransburg SU	0.8										0.8	Multiple
NFS Miles	8.7	82.4	21	37.3	25.1	44.3	31.9	1.3	8.4	0	260.7	
SUP Miles	0.8	5.6	0	0	0	10.4	0	0	0	0	16.8	
Grand Total	9.5	88.0	21	37.3	25.1	54.7	31.9	1.3	8.4	0	277.5	

Appendix E continued:

Mgt Area	2.4	2.8	3.3	5.1	6.2	6.4	7.1	8.1	8.2	8.3	Total Miles
Acres	16972	89631	13168	12836	18557	23412	6328	72	18314	611	199901
Square Miles	26.52	140.05	20.58	20.06	29.00	36.58	9.89	.11	28.62	.95	312.35
Max density	2.0	2.5	2.5	NA	2.0	2.0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Current density	0.36	0.63	1.02	1.86	0.87	1.50	3.23	11.6	0.29	-	0.89
Maximum miles	53.0	350.1	51.4	40.0	58.0	73.2	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Current Miles	9.5	88.0	21.0	37.3	25.1	54.7	31.9	1.3	8.4	-	277.2
Miles remain	43.5	262.1	30.4	2.7	32.9	18.5	NA	NA	NA	NA	

<i>Type Trail</i>	No. of Trails	No. of Miles
NFS bike/hike/horse	11	167.9
NFS bike/hike only	2	7.9
NFS horse/hike only	2	34.5
NFS hike only	13	50.4
Total	28	260.7
Total NFS hiking available	28	260.7
Total NFS biking available	13	175.8
Total NFS horse available	13	202.4

Appendix F

Summary of Responses to 1/12/07 Draft Trail Plan

This appendix is a summary of public response to the Hoosier National Forest trail review letter and draft trail plan of January 12, 2007. The public involvement effort included a mailing to 82 key contacts and persons in leadership positions from all trail user groups (hikers, horse riders, and mountain bikers), members of the Indiana Trails Advisory Board, all trail permit vendors, and all adjacent horse camps. A news release was printed in the Bedford, Bloomington, Martinsville, Spencer, and Perry County newspapers. The trail review letter and draft trail plan was posted on the Hoosier National Forest Website. Hoosier National Forest staff were also invited to provide a summary at two horse club meetings and one meeting with adjacent camp owners. Thirty responses were received to include two from the OHV community, three from the hiking community, none from the mountain biking community, and the remainder from the horse riding community.

Each response was assigned a number to identify the respondent and track the comments. If the respondent indicated affiliation with an organization, then that organization's name is noted. If the respondent provided an email comment with no name specified, the respondent is identified by their email name.

This appendix summarizes comments and proposals for new trails. A "C" indicates the comment or proposal, and "R" indicates the USDA Forest Service response.

The source of the comment or proposal is indicated by number in parenthesis. Like comments or proposals are grouped together.

The following list identifies those who responded:

Name	Organization Represented	Response #
Adjacent horsecamp owners (joint letter signed by owners and managers)	Midwest Trail Ride, Inc.; Maumee Horse Camp; Monk's Mule and Horse Camp; the MANE Trails, Inc.	1
Benda, Ron		2
Bolden, Jane		3
Burton, Ken	Old Capital Saddle Club	4
Brown, Denzil	Shirley creek Trail riders Association	5
Bundy, Lizbeth	Jackson Co Spurs and Wheels Saddle Club	6
Christensen, Russ		7
Davis, Kathy		8
Dawes, Karen and Don	Hoosier Backcountry Horsemen	9
Earles, Sara	Hoosier Backcountry Horsemen, Spurs and Wheels, and Indiana Horse Council	10
EireannachCroi		11
Fischesser, Tony		12
Haltom, Steve		13
Humphries, Kim and Jeff	Midwest Trails Ride	14
Lane, Alan		15
Munniksma, Lisa		16
McKean, Linda	Midwest Trails Ride	17
Monk, Jean and Marty	Monk's Mule and Horse Camp	18
Riehl, Chris and Nanci		19
Ritter, Carroll	Sycamore Land Trust	20
Revalee, Sharon	Hoosier Backcountry Horsemen, Indiana Trail Riders Association, and Indiana Horse Council	21
Rollins, Yvette	Hoosier Backcountry Horsemen, Indiana Trail Riders Association, and Indiana Horse Council	22
Smith, Regina		23
Snyder, Yonda		24
Wineinger, Leon and Frances		25
Yakimchick, Mike		26
Zurawski, Maciej	Indiana Four Wheel drive Association	27
Mittenthal, Susanne	Hoosier Hikers Council	28
GeGe Showalter		29
Freitag, Christian	Sycamore Land Trust	30

Public Comments and Responses

C: Do not require adjacent camps to obtain an outfitter guide permit (1, 2, 6, 12, 14, 17, 18, 25).

R: As indicated in this document, the Forest Service will not require adjacent camps to obtain an outfitter guide permit unless they are going to rent gear or horses, or conduct guided trail rides. This was based on concerns from the camp owners and others about increased costs from liability insurance and permit fees, additional administrative burden, and the fact that the trail tag program already provides a method with which to recover costs to deal with impacts from camp customers.

C: Hoosier National Forest horse campgrounds should not be free, free campgrounds take customers from adjacent commercial camps, and trail fee money should not be spent on trailheads (1, 12).

R: Because of the primitive nature of the horsecamps, maintenance costs are minimal. Routine work includes mowing, toilet cleaning, and litter pickup. The Forest attempts to limit the fee burden on the public as much as possible, and strives to only charge for those things that have high maintenance costs. For example, developed campgrounds with lots of infrastructure such as electrical hookups and showers require more maintenance and a fee is charged accordingly.

In regard to the concern about Forest campgrounds taking away from private campgrounds, it is noted each offers a different product that draws a different customer and is priced accordingly. Private adjacent horsecamps offer many more amenities than Hoosier National Forest horsecamps. For example, they generally offer water, showers, individual sites, and electrical hookups, and in some cases offer dining facilities, indoor riding, and covered stalls. The mix of public and private campgrounds offering varying amenities provides the public with a wider range of choices. Those campers desiring more amenities and willing to pay for it may choose a private campground. Those desiring a primitive experience may choose the Forest campgrounds. In addition, it is noted that Forest trails are provided for the public and not for the benefit of private camps. The establishment of private camps near trail systems conveys no special privileges in matters related to marketing and competition.

Under the Forest Service's *Interim Implementation Guidelines for the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act*, dated April 25, 2005, the majority of the following amenities must be available in order to charge a fee: tent or trailer space, picnic tables, drinking water, access roads, fee collection by a Forest Service official, reasonable visitor protection, refuse containers, toilet facilities, and a device for containing campfires (USDA Forest Service 2005). Currently, German Ridge is the only horsecamp that fully meets this criteria and a fee is charged at that location.

Trail fee income is occasionally spent on horsecamps and trailheads because those facilities are considered part of the trail system. Any rider who is saddled up in a

campground or trailhead is required to have a trail tag and therefore contributes to both the maintenance of the trail and trailhead/camp.

C: Do not close any trails, do not proceed with the closures proposed in the trail plan, horses need more trail miles than hikers so additional miles should be added, support the addition of new multiple use trails (3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29).

R: While the Forest wants to provide trail opportunities to as many users as possible, this goal must also be balanced with good land stewardship and protection of Forest resources. Since 1991, the Forest has constructed new trails and improved the condition of multiple use trails to the point that almost 2 million dollars have been spent above and beyond the fixed annual costs. The Forest has reached a point where two situations are now present: 1) lack of funding to sustain the existing trails and 2) lack of an adequate land base to provide more trails.

In regards to the funding issue, the Forest simply cannot afford to maintain the current number of multiple use trail miles with the budgets we have. To provide year around, all weather use for multiple use trails, the Forest must continually harden and shape the trails in order to protect soil and water resources. This is a very expensive proposition, with costs for heavy maintenance running between \$3,000 to \$7,000 a mile. Budgets are declining, and income from the trail tag program, while very helpful, contributes only a portion of the actual need. In order to become more efficient, it makes sense to concentrate our efforts on those trails that get a lot of use and are cost effective to maintain. For these reasons the Forest will close the Ogala Trail, the short disjointed segment to the south the German Ridge Trail, and a dead end route on the Oriole East Trail. Each of those trails are causing impacts to soil and water resources, are low use, and would require very extensive remedial work at very high costs. It makes better sense to use that money on high use trails that do not require such extensive work. It is noted these closures account for only a 4 % loss of multiple trail use miles, and if the connector proposals are implemented that figure drops to less than 3%. The Forest will consider a replacement for the closed segment of the Oriole East Trail, but only if a suitable location can be found and if funding is available.

In regard to the land base, almost every major block of land on the Forest is already occupied with a multiple use trail. The Forest has many other purposes beyond providing multiple use trails. Some portions of the Forest need to be free of the effects from trails so that these other purposes might be met. Examples include enhancement of plant and animal species, gathering forest products, hunting, maintaining healthy watersheds, protection of special areas, and so on. The current trail density of the Forest is nearly one mile of trail for every square mile of land. It is not good stewardship to focus so much of the Forest land base on trails at the expense of the other resources. Quite simply, the Forest has run out of room for long trail systems required by horse and bike users.

C: Question the need for more hiking trails instead of horse trails, question the data regarding the demand and use of trails by hikers.

R: The scoping process for this trail plan did not result in a high demand for more hiking trails, therefore no new hiking trails are included in the Implementation Schedule. However, in the interest of answering this question, the following summary is provided. Several research documents list pedestrian use as a high demand recreational activity in Indiana. For example, *The Indiana State Trails Greenways and Bikeways Plan*, published in July 2006, summarizes a trail user study conducted annually by the DNR every 5 years since 1993. The text on page 88 states: “The use of trails for walking, running, hiking, and bicycling is increasing while using trails for horseback riding and mountain biking is decreasing” (DNR 2006). The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan lists walking/hiking/jogging as the number one outdoor recreation activity in Indiana, and also lists walking/hiking/jogging as the number one for latent demand activity (DNR 2000). Latent demand is a measure of activities people would be most likely to participate in if more facilities were available. A social assessment conducted for the Hoosier National Forest indicate 88 percent of the people interviewed for that study liked or strongly liked the Hoosier National Forest for hiking (Welch *et al.* 2001). Finally, the Hoosier National Forest participated in an ongoing national study by the Forest Service to determine recreational use at each forest in the United States. The findings indicated that 36% of Forest users participated in hiking or walking, 5% participated in horseback riding, and 1% participated in biking (USDA Forest Service 2004). Finally, data collected by our trail patrol staff indicated the following breakout of users on multiple use trails: 80% horseriders, 18% hikers, and 2% bike riders (Stewart 2007). Data was not collected on the hiking only trails.

C: Suggest hikers pay a fee for trail use (9, 12, 17, 21, 22, 24).

R: The trail permit program is designed to help recover costs from those activities that require a higher level of development and more expense. The trails used by horses and mountain bikes are subject to greater impacts and require a much higher level of development and maintenance than those used only by hikers. In fact, very little of the Forest’s trail maintenance budget is directed toward hiking-only trails because the impact is much less and they simply do not need that much work. The current Forest budget is adequate to maintain hiking-only trails and does not need to be supplemented with money from the trail permit program. The situation is similar to camping. A fee is charged to camp in a developed campground where campers require a higher level of development such as a graveled pad, electricity, water, and so on. Backcountry or roadside camping, where little development is required, is free.

The 7.7 mile Pate Hollow hiking trail constructed in 2004 is provided as an example. Construction costs were approximately \$9000 and utilized volunteers from the hiking and horse riding communities. In the 3 year time period since construction, about 10 person days and no supplies have been needed for maintenance. The remaining hiking trails on the Forest were also in need of only minimal care. In contrast, maintenance expenditures for the multiple use trails were \$352,000 for the same time period.

C: Offer for volunteer assistance to help with the budget shortfall (4, 16).

R: All offers of volunteer assistance are appreciated, welcomed, and are a valuable supplement to the trail program. However, the Forest asks that people understand the trail program is a very large and complex effort. The program requires special expertise such as professional scientists to perform environmental analysis, engineers for trail layout, and heavy equipment operators to do the ground work. There also requirements for equipment and supplies including bulldozers and dump trucks, large quantities of gravel, and other material such as geotech fabric. All of these functions must be available forty hours a week over much of the year, require large amounts of money, and in the case of personnel, may require special certifications or licensing. In cases where safety is an issue or severe resource damage is occurring, an immediate response is needed. These are requirements that are beyond the capabilities of most volunteer organizations. However, volunteers do have much to offer and bring their own special expertise to the Forest, particularly from the user's perspective. This is a very valuable asset and we hope to continue such relationships.

C: Closing trails will cause an increase in use and impacts on other trails (19).

R: The segments that will be closed represent only 4% of the multiple use trails. Also, these segments appear to get little use based on lack of hoof or bike tire prints and vegetation growing in on the trails. Therefore, it appears these closures would not displace a large number of users to other trails.

C: Support the addition of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) connectors to the trail system, but suggest they be made multiple use (10, 21, 22).

R: There are three places where the ADT will be added to the system where it is not already on a designated trail or county road: two segments between Tipsaw Trail and Two Lakes Loop Trail, and northwest of the Two Lakes Loop Trail towards Uniontown. The mileage to be added is approximately 1.8 miles. The Two Lakes Loop Trail is a hiking only trail, therefore multiple use riders would only have a short, dead end route and would not be able to connect with that trail system. Therefore, these segments of the ADT will be open to hikers only.

C: Never see anyone checking for trail tags (2).

R: We employ a full time trail ranger who fulfills that duty along with other assignments. In 2006, he conducted approximately 100 trail patrols and checked 551 trail users. Forest Service Law enforcement staff and Forest Protection Officers also perform this duty.

C: Supportive of the proposal for the D Trail reroute, loop and trailhead near Hickory Ridge #16, and future connectors when feasible; support overall plan (5, 9, 10, 17, 21, 26).

R: Comments noted, thank you.

C: Do not use trails for haul roads during timber sales (4).

R: Some routes on the Forest have a dual designation as a trail and road and are documented in the Forest inventory database known as INFRA. If it is designated as a road it is generally an access road for a timber sale or other use, and is not open to public vehicular use. If these routes are not used for a long period of time, they grow in and resemble a trail more than a road. However, the route is still a road and will be rehabilitated as such if needed although it may also still be open to trail use. If a particular trail segment is not a designated road but is needed for temporary access, it may be used for access but then returned to its original condition (as much as possible) when it is no longer needed.

C: Concern that money from fines does not stay on the Forest (9, 21, 22).

R: The procedure for handling income from fines is determined by the Department of Justice. A \$25.00 fee is levied for court costs, and the revenue from the actual fine goes to the US Treasury. One purpose of this procedure is to remove the perception that officers are issuing tickets simply to obtain more funding for the Forest.

C: When charging a fee the public should be involved and there should be accountability (15).

R: We agree. The public was involved in the process when the trail fee was initially instituted in 1998, and most recently, under the Recreation Enhancement Act, the Forest Service is required to form citizen's advisory committees known as a Recreation Resource Advisory Committee to review fee proposals. The Eastern Region of the Forest Service has recently formed such a committee. Also, the Hoosier National Forest annually meets with trail users to gain input as to where fee income should be spent. Finally, an annual financial report is posted on the Forest website and displays income and expenditures. Recreation fee financial summaries for the last 3 years may be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hoosier/recreation/trpermits.htm>

C: The Forest should allow motorized off highway vehicle (OHV) use (15, 21).

R: This issue is beyond the scope of this analysis. The use of OHVs on the Hoosier National Forest was addressed during the Forest Plan revision process that occurred during the period December 2000 through January 2006. Public input was sought during that time, the development of ATV trails was included in one of the alternatives, but was not the alternative selected. The Forest Plan prohibits the use of OHVs except on public roads, therefore, this Trail Plan follows that guidance.

C: Suggest converting Celina Interpretive Trail to a trail that is accessible to people with disabilities so that an accessible trail is available at the southern end of the forest.

R: There has been no public input to indicate demand for an accessible trail in that area. If such a demand became apparent, the Forest would consider the feasibility of converting the trail.

C: Suggest an interpretive hiking trail and designating a “Natural Outdoor Learning Area” in the Beaver Creek and Gobbler’s Knob area for use by local schools (20, 30).

R: The Forest supports efforts for environmental education and could even provide a Forest Service environmental education specialist to participate. However, we feel this activity could be accomplished adequately without the construction of additional trails or change of designation.

We recently completed the Forest Plan which delineates land areas known as Management Areas. This concept is similar to city zoning. The Beaver Creek area lies in Management Area 8.2 and Gobblers Knob in Management Area 2.8. Because these areas were already thoroughly analyzed during the Forest Plan revision process, and because there has been no changed conditions, it does not appear to be reasonable to change the designation or add a new designation. Outdoor learning activities are permitted almost anywhere on the Forest and no special designation is needed.

It appears the demand for this trail is driven more by the desire for a place to conduct environmental education activities rather than a demand for more hiking trails by the public. There were no other requests for hiking in this area other than from the proponents of the environmental education proposal. Since use would be limited to occasional visits by classes, it does not seem prudent to conduct the extensive analysis and spend the funds necessary to establish an official trail. The remote location of the trail also makes it questionable if enough use would occur to justify it. School groups could still easily access the area by using on the old roadbeds and could still enter the general forest for nature study.

C: Suggest identifying a route for the Knobstone Trail across the Hoosier National Forest (28).

R: The Knobstone Trail is administered by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The Forest will attempt to identify a route across the Forest for this trail if and when the IDNR is able to acquire property or right-of-ways that would enable the trail to reach National Forest System lands. In addition to the easement issue, another major obstacle is the need for a bridge across Little Salt Creek. In response to a request from the Hoosier Hikers Council last year, Forest Service staff could not find a suitable crossing but did identify a location for a bridge. However, the location is such that a very expensive bridge would need to be constructed, and is beyond the financial capability of the Forest.

C: Concern about charging fees to ride horses and the use of tax dollars on foreign policy issues (11).

R: Use of tax dollars by other government agencies is beyond the scope of this analysis. The Forest is authorized to charge fees for trail use under the Recreation Enhancement Act and does so to offset the maintenance costs.