



Success Stories



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ATV Riders Team Up to Help Manage Recreation

With local All-Terrain Vehicle Clubs struggling to prevent property damage—and the Forest Service pursuing its initiative to address unmanaged recreation on the National Forests—the timing was perfect for Teresa Maday, Assistant Ranger for Natural Resources, to seek assistance from the Wisconsin ATV Association Trail Ambassadors.

Together, the Trail Ambassadors and Forest Service employees rode the trails making public contacts to encourage safe, responsible, and smart riding. They provided information and distributed trail maps during the busy July 4 weekend at the Washburn Ranger District on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

On any given weekend there are a thousand or more riders traveling the 54 miles of networked trails on the Forest’s Washburn District. ATV use, which is increasing by at least 30 percent each year, combined with the current Forest Plan direction, which allows for travel off of trails and roads (“cross-country”), has produced several resource management issues.



The Trail Ambassadors helped Forest Service employees spread the word about the importance of staying on posted trails.

The Forest has instituted area closures where necessary to allow damaged wetlands, deep ruts on slopes, and other land areas to recover, and is analyzing through its Plan Revision process alternatives for more active ATV management.

The Trail Patrol Ambassador Program, promoted by the Wisconsin ATV Association (WATVA), actively recruits new ATV safety instructors from the state. With help from the local Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, WATVA trains the patrollers in safety guidelines and laws governing ATV use.

After the instructors are trained, they take yet another class to become a Trail Patrol Ambassador, which earns them their “yellow patroller’s vest.” They then stake out a portion of an ATV trail and report violations and “hot spots” to local law enforcement officials.

Currently, there are over 250 trained Patrol Ambassadors and more coming on board.

With only one law enforcement agent from the Bayfield County Sheriff’s Department, one official from the WDNR, and one agent from the Washburn District, the probability of catching riders in the act of damaging property or violating regulations is slim.

Local clubs are becoming increasingly aware of their need to be involved in the regulation of ATV traffic and promotion of safe riding practices. Through Maday’s contacts with the Trail Ambassador Program, the local Washburn ATV clubs have become interested and will be receiving their patroller’s training very soon.

Since the July 4 weekend, there has been another patrol day. On August 23, more than 15 Ambassadors and local club trainees assisted in another volunteer trail patrol on the Washburn District.

District Ranger Chris Worth said this effort is breaking new ground.

“We’ve never tried doing this before, where the Forest Service and the ATV association get together to encourage responsible riding,” Worth said. “From the Forest Service perspective, the majority of our forest visitors do the right thing and we just want to reinforce that behavior as well as keep an eye out for that really small minority who aren’t so willing to do the right thing.”

Inside:

Midwin’s Search for Freedom

Staff Adopts Soldiers Overseas

Laying Siege to Invasive Weeds

Bringing a Wilderness Together

Hoosier’s Boundary Line Work

What is a Success Story?

Building Cribs on the Wayne

Chippewa Opens Migizi Trail

Hiawatha Volunteer’s Invention



“Searching for Freedom” on the Midewin

For the second year in a row on August 8, the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie presented “Searching for Freedom-Traveling the Underground Railroad,” a campfire program geared toward explaining remarkable journeys of an unforgettable time period.

With an estimated 80 people surrounding the campfire ring, along with 80,000 mosquitoes and one bat flying through the sky, the evening began. Shawnee National Forest Archaeologist Mary McCorvie opened the program with a glimpse of Underground Railroad history, telling her audience interesting details about the people who escaped slavery, and reminding them that 80 percent of slaves were young men between the ages of 13-29.

Offering information on how Illinois played a distinct role in the operation was vital. McCorvie noted that the state was an important lifeline for slaves escaping to the Promised Land. Two known liberty lines began in southern Illinois, and extended through Wilmington into Chicago. Local activists shuttled slaves to freedom, and the tallgrasses and prairies served as hideouts for many slaves on the run. It was a state that made freedom a reality for many.

Out in the distance as the sun began to set and the crickets began to chirp, Forest Service Interpreter Marlene Rivero slowly came up a path to the campfire ring dressed in period costume with a cane in hand singing “Wade in the Water” as she began her portrayal of the famous abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman.

Rivero told the life story of Tubman, who was born in the 1820s in Dorchester, Maryland. Using a passionate and strong voice, Rivero engaged the audience in her performance as she described her education: “I helped my daddy do all our work outdoors, that’s where I got educated, outdoors. I learned to hide the scent from dogs, eat roots off plants, and use ‘em like medicine, and I learned how to survive. I was stronger than any man.”

The program was dramatic, captivating, and unique in the sense that everyone joined in singing Underground Railroad spirituals at the program’s close. The majority of the people commented that the prairie surroundings under the night sky gave them the feeling of being back in time, helping bring Tubman’s story to life.

“The evening went well, we had an excellent turn out, and both of our actors did an accurate and entertaining portrayal of their characters,” according to Tour specialist Dennis Reavis.

Author Glennette Tilley Turner gave the program’s closing an added element of excitement. Turner, who wrote “The Underground Railroad in Illinois,” stood up and announced that another success in the Illinois preservation of Underground Railroad history had occurred earlier that day.

She said Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed a Public Law for the creation of the Freedom Trail Commission within the Illinois Historical Preservation Agency. This marked more than a mile stone; it was a huge success for all those concerned with the preservation of history.

The Commission will work with state and federal authorities to create programs, conferences, and public forums on the Underground Railroad and develop partnerships to seek public and private funds to carry out activities that promote and preserve the legacy of the freedom trail and Underground Railroad. It will also work with the Illinois State Board of Education to develop a curriculum for use in Illinois public schools with an emphasis on state Underground Railroad history.

The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie has long been involved in the preservation of Underground Railroad history. In 2002, Midewin hosted a passport in time project where replica Underground Railroad signal quilts were made. Last year, a mural was commissioned by Midewin that features paintings of local Underground Railroad history; and lastly a brochure entitled “The Ride to Freedom” was written and is available upon request.



The Underground Railroad campfire program featured a dramatic portrayal of Harriet Tubman.



Wayne Mobilizes to Support Troops

Pam Stachler is the Hydrologist on the Wayne National Forest. Her son Nick is in Baghdad with the U.S. Army. She—along with mothers across the nation—wait, worry, and do whatever they can to support the soldiers serving in Iraq.

When Nick called last week on one of the rare occasions he was able to access a phone, Pam was at work. The whole Nelsonville office soon knew that a call had come in and that Nick was doing fine. With candles in the window and frequent care packages going out, the entire office had adopted Nick and been concerned about him as well as Forest Supervisor Mary Reddan's two children, who are both deployed overseas.

Stachler reported that Nick was doing fine, that the Iraqi people were very nice, but that there were a couple of soldiers in his unit who never got mail. Nick said he'd been sharing his care packages from the Wayne with those soldiers, but that it might be nice if the office adopted them as well.

When Stachler mentioned this to Katrina Schultes and Marsha Wikle, the two sprung into action. A message went out asking if Wayne employees were interested in helping re-supply these additional soldiers. Two boxes were set up in the break room, and within a couple days the boxes were full and money was collected for postage.

"Mail is a life line to those guys," Stachler said. "I'm sure PFC Canadas Eddie and PFC Emilio Martinez will be thrilled." Stachler said both soldiers are in Alpha Company of the same Air Infantry Regiment as her son. She said some employees gave money for postage and to purchase whatever was needed. Enough money was left over after cramming the boxes as full as she could, to send each of them \$20 to buy phone cards or ice cream.

Not only has the Forest sent a care package to each soldier, they've agreed to continue to send packages every month. In addition, Becky Ewing and Connie Roberts have started writing the soldiers. Ewing and Roberts said they didn't want to think these guys never received a letter at mail call, so they have each adopted one of them.

Meanwhile, the candles still burn and the memorial flag still flies for the four family members of the Nelsonville office serving overseas.



Care packages were sent to soldiers serving their country in Iraq.

Volunteers Attack Invasive Weeds on the Hiawatha NF



Volunteers cleared swaths of invasive weeds during a four-day project on the Hiawatha NF.

On July 19, nine volunteers from The Nature Conservancy began a four-day project to remove invasive weeds on the Hiawatha National Forest. The work focused for three days on Grand Island and one day's work at Bay Furnace Campground.

The TNC volunteers hand pulled 49 40-gallon bags of spotted knapweed and filled another 30-plus bags with scotch pine cones in an effort to control spotted knapweed and scotch pine at two highly used recreation sites. TNC volunteers donated over 150 hours to accomplish this Non Native Invasive Species goal and restored approximately three acres during the four-day project.

The project benefited the Munising Ranger District. The group concentrated their work on Grand Island and Williams Landing, the entry point for the island. At Williams Landing the group removed 38 40-gallon bags full of spotted knapweed and another 25 plus bags full of scotch pine cones. They worked

through rain, fog, and high temperatures to accomplish their task.

On their last day they pulled weeds at Bay Furnace Campground, located straight across the bay from Grand Island. They hand pulled another 11-plus bags of spotted knapweed just from the furnace site.

In addition, they cut and removed a great deal of dead and dying *rosa rugosa* plants. In just one day they highly improved this historic site and released many of the native plants that were impacted by the NNIS plant species.



Working Toward the Complete Wilderness



The Shawnee NF is working closely with local landowners to

The Illinois Wilderness Act of 1990 designated seven areas of the Shawnee National Forest as Wilderness. These new wildernesses involved 26,266 gross acres, but only 25,549—or 97 percent—were managed as part of the Shawnee.

Although a reasonably low percentage of the land base, the presence of non national forest land provides the potential for incompatible uses within the Wilderness, lowering the quality of the wilderness experience and increasing the federal administrative cost.

On August 6, Shawnee NF personnel successfully completed the acquisition of a ten-acre parcel within the Bald Knob Wilderness. This parcel had been owned by Union County, Illinois.

Similar to other wilderness parcels, negotiations to acquire this parcel were difficult because of the speculative value that is assigned to other ownership in areas identified as congressionally designated wilderness.

Eighteen separate landowners were involved in the ownership of the 717 acres of land that was not managed by the Shawnee NF when the areas were designated wilderness. During the past 13 years, the acquisition of land within this designated wilderness has been a high priority for Shawnee NF officers.

Unfortunately, real estate speculators have been similarly drawn to landowners within the Wilderness. Success in the acquisition of Wilderness land has been modest and includes the 80-acre Weinberg Tract in the Panther Den Wilderness, the 20-acre Fishencord Tract within the Bald Knob Wilderness, and the 10-acre Union County Tract.

Altogether, 110 acres of those non-federally owned 717 acres within the Shawnee NF designated wildernesses have been acquired to date.

Shawnee management of all areas within the Wilderness has been established as the desired future condition, and forest officers are pursuing acquisition of privately held land. Several hurdles are anticipated in the accomplishment of this goal, but the Forest welcomes the challenge.

Hoosier Firefighters Work Boundary—Not Fire—Lines

The Hoosier National Forest has this summer initiated a program to use wildland firefighters to maintain forest boundary lines. Thanks to the hard work of the Tyler VanOrmer, Daron Reynolds and Kevin Wilson from the Brownstown Ranger District, 10 miles of property boundary were maintained and almost eight miles of boundary posts were removed from unnecessary boundary lines. Some boundary lines were originally marked and posted nearly 30 years ago.

The 200,000 acre Hoosier National Forest is an urban area forest with a fragmented landownership pattern. A result of a fragmented ownership pattern with many miles of forest boundary, around 1350 miles.

In the 1970's the Forest Service began funding the marking and posting of their boundaries at a higher rate than any time in history. Today, many are in dire need of maintenance. Property boundary maintenance consists of replacing missing or broken posts on the property line and repainting the blazes on trees along the property line. A maintenance cycle of 15 years would be desirable, but many of the property boundaries have not had any maintenance since they were marked and posted. Another benefit of maintenance is “getting on the ground” walking the boundaries and looking for encroachments or illegal dump sites.

The lands program on the Hoosier National Forest considers the firefighters' assistance a great asset to the boundary management program, and will continue to utilize and fund wildland firefighters in the “off-season.”



Chippewa Celebrates Smokey's 59th

Despite protests that he is only 29, Smokey Bear's true history was revealed at Smokey's 59th birthday celebration at the Norway Beach and Cut Foot Sioux Visitor Centers on August 9 on the Chippewa National Forest.

Hosts Dick and Dort Pride started the Smokey Day festivities with a huge birthday cake and a traditional birthday song. Smokey made the rounds, greeting families and sharing his fire prevention message with the help of Forest Service staff. After a short program on western wildfires this summer, visitors were invited to join in a "Firefighter Relay" activity.

Wearing nomex and hardhats, the kids raced to the backpack pumps and squirted out the "mock" fire. Racing back, they handed off their equipment to the next future fire fighter. At the finish, staff talked to the kids about all the hard work and training that goes in to being a firefighter. The message—Keeping firefighters and communities safe during a high fire danger season is everyone's job. Help Smokey Prevent Wildfires!

Throughout the day, visitors were able to check up on the latest western wildfire news, watch videos on fire prevention, home safety and wildfire fighting, and have questions answered about wildfires. Kids created Smokey posters for the Visitor Centers and of course, got a big furry hug from the Birthday Bear!

Chippewa National Forest fire crews and education staff present wildfire programs to hundreds of visitors, school and community groups each year. In an area where arson is a factor and rural homes are tucked into the forest, fire education becomes high priority. Fire crews work not only with kids, but with land owners, Forest frontliners, and local contractors about fire weather, burning permits, and prescribed burning.

The efforts of the fire crews on the Forest is really the success story---and unfortunately, their work during the August fire season does not allow them to sit back and enjoy a slice of Birthday Cake. But we pause a moment and appreciate their work both fighting fire and igniting the flame of learning in northern Minnesota.



Smokey celebrated his 59th birthday with friends on the Chippewa.

How Do You Define Success? In Each Area, It's Different



Ron Ellis shares thoughts on what makes for success.

I was reviewing some of the success stories in a recent volume of Success Stories and pondered what success would be in different parts of the local organization.

For Ross Taylor, Tom Krueger, and Ron Ellis, it might be having the decision on the Breedlove Road Access upheld after review of an appeal. For Chris Peterson and other fire personnel, it might be avoiding an appeal on the Tornado Blowdown project. For the core team for the Forest Plan Revision—Eric Sandeno, Kelle Reynolds, Judi Perez, Teena Ligman and Ron Ellis—it might be the attendance and willing participation of citizens at two alternative development meetings held in August.

For Aquatics Biologist Anne Timm, success might be the completion of the season's stream surveys by her crew. Or it might be having the cultural resources data mostly entered into the computer system in the mind of Forest Archaeologist Angie Krieger. For many personnel, it might be having completed safe and productive fire assignments in the West. For Pat Merchant, Keno Koehl, Ron Overshiner, Bob Aynes, James Klug, and a number of Indiana DNR employees, it might be beginning on-the-ground work on the narrows restoration project.

After reflecting a bit, I recognized that success can mean different things to different people. As the Forest NEPA Coordinator, success for me means is involving the public in our project planning, communicating our project plans clearly, meeting and working with members of the public during Forest Plan meetings, and appropriately implementing laws and procedures and minimizing appeals and won lawsuits.



Wayne Provides for Bass & Bluegill



Volunteers built "cribs" for the bass and bluegill population.

A diverse group with a common interest turned Lake Vesuvius into a center of activity August 23. The group was led by Wildlife Biologist Becky Ewing and included Ironton Ranger District employees, and David Bright from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and his crew.

Among the volunteers were local people and college students from Ohio Southern University and Shawnee University. The project for the day was to build structures to house and protect the bass and bluegill that will be stocked in Vesuvius after the valve is closed and the lake is re-filled.

Lake Vesuvius was drained in the winter of 2001 for renovation of the dam. When the lake was drained, there were a lack of structures that fish could use for breeding areas and protection from bigger fish. In the two years that the lake has been drained, natural growth has occurred that makes the lake look more like a meadow than a lake.

The new grass, small trees, and flowers fill the channel where water used to flow. While the beavers drop logs near the shoreline, the deeper areas of the lake have very little to offer the fish for habitat or "bed and breakfast."

The ODNR personnel were on-hand to give easy-to-follow instructions on the building of the structures called "cribs." The cribs are made from stacking cedar posts to form squares much like "Lincoln Logs." The posts are then secured at the corners with wire and weighted down with cement blocks. The cribs vary in height depending on the depth of the lake. After the cribs were completed, the Christmas trees were "stuffed" inside.

Bass will swim around the crib and the bluegill will occupy the inside of the crib closer to the Christmas trees. Building these fish habitats also allow for the recycling of the trees involved. The cedar posts were not marketable and might have otherwise been discarded. The Christmas trees were all donated from folks in the surrounding communities.

The goal for the day was to construct seven sites with two cribs at each site. Before the lake is filled, about 25 additional cribs will be completed in various areas of the lake.

Migizi Bike Trail Dedicated on the Chippewa

Visitors enjoying the serene beauty of the Migizi bike trail this autumn will most likely pause for a moment as they peddle along to say a silent thank you to those who put together this trail.

What started as a passing idea for a bike trail system thru the Chippewa National Forest years before biking became popular recreation is now an 18-mile looped trail connecting the Cass Lake area to state trails outside the Forest.

Visitors and Forest staff celebrated the new connections earlier this summer at a Trail Dedication ceremony. More than 100 people joined in the celebration at Norway Beach Recreation Area, taking in the official ceremonies as well as the antics of trail mascot Migizi the Eagle, naturalist activities and a trail tour on bikes and rollerblades.

Those honored at the ceremony represented the wide range of partners who helped turn the idea into reality. Representatives from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Department of Natural Resources, Trails and Waterways, Cass County, Cass Lake Chamber of Commerce and the City of Cass Lake, National Forest Foundation, and Enbridge Construction.

Work on the Migizi trail began in 1995 with a 2.5 mile segment thru the Norway Beach Recreation Area and was completed in October 2002, connecting the loop to other paved bike trails. A future goal for the Migizi trail is to connect with the Great River Road system and expand the trail system into northeast Minnesota.

The goal for that day however, was to cut the ribbon and enjoy this beautiful new stretch of trail through a breathtaking part of the Forest. And to thank those who contributed to this piece of the ongoing project.



The Chippewa's Migizi bike trail dedication brought out a group of distinguished partners and VIPs.



Volunteer Unveils Inventive Seed Sorter

“Next year, it’ll have a motor,” promised Mike Taylor, a long-time Hiawatha National Forest volunteer from Wetmore in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. His threshing machine was showcased to four Forest employees who agreed one day this summer to help Taylor collect hair grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) from a nearly five-acre plot that he had discovered within the Forest last year.

It turned out to be one of the hottest days of the summer when the Forest employees rode out to meet Taylor. This was not going to be an easy day to harvest anything, they remembered thinking. Along with the tireless volunteer, they marched through the grass until finding a path that Taylor said they could make “good time” traversing.

Though trying their best to keep up, none could match the deftness of his hands as he gathered bundle after bundle to cut. After all, this was a man in his 80s. Even though the backs began to ache, the Hiawatha employees kept reassuring themselves, “If he can do it, so can we.”

Amazingly, all the boxes that their truck could hold were filled in a little more than two hours. All morning, Taylor affectionately dubbed the group his “crew” and observed that—since we had worked so hard—he guessed he would have to feed them.

They drove back to Taylor’s quaint little cabin on a beautiful inland lake where his wife Simmie, also a Hiawatha Native Plant Program volunteer, had prepared a hearty lunch.

As Mike tended the barbecue, the group pondered the daunting task of having to thresh all that seed. By hand, it would take weeks.

Fortunately, Taylor was about to unveil his latest invention. It was a hand cranked mini-thresher with rubber-tipped paddles and a floating floor on adjustable springs, which allowed the seed to sift through a screen and into a drawer on the bottom. It was an impressive and effective device that drastically reduced the time it would take to sift the seed collected on that day.

Currently, the operation takes two people: one to work the crank while another feeds the grass in and out. However, as soon as Taylor finds a suitable motor for the crank, the process will only require the efforts of one person.

That afternoon, thanks to Taylor’s ingenious device, the group quickly became efficient threshers. And got plenty of hands-on experience operating the clever invention. The cleaned seed of this native grass will now be put into other native seed mixes for various restoration projects throughout the Hiawatha.

The group agreed this was one of the best times they had shared with their special volunteers, the Taylors. Taylor has generously offered the Forest the continued use of his unique thresher machine.

It certainly is more productive—and fun—than manually sorting through the seed collection.



Mike Taylor volunteers his time and creative efforts on the Hiawatha NF.

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