

DRAFT Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Master Plan Amendment

Trail Extension from Crosby to Deerwood



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Parks and Trails

June 2013



Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Master Plan Amendment

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Division of Parks and Trails

This master plan amendment has been prepared as required by 2010 Minnesota Laws Chapter 86A.09, Subdivision 1.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Trails would like to thank all who participated in this planning process.

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[Placeholder for Director approval memo]

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Purpose of the Amendment

The purpose of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Master Plan Amendment is two-fold:

- To formally reroute the primary state trail corridor through the city of Deerwood to create a safe, off-road, paved trail connection between the community and the city of Crosby, the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, and beyond.
- To clarify that, where dual trail treadways are not possible to develop – due to limitations including private property, wetlands, and other constraints – a single treadway may be provided and utilized by a variety of trail users in all seasons, including snowmobiles when sufficient snowfall is present.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has worked closely with the Crow Wing County, the cities of Crosby and Deerwood, and local partners and stakeholders to identify a preferred trail corridor for the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail between Crosby and Deerwood. Given the opportunity to safely connect the community's residents and businesses to nearby communities, parks and historic sites, the development of this four-mile segment is a high-priority.

This amendment supplements the 2004 Cuyuna Lakes State Trail Master Plan and revises specific portions of it. The amendment does not wholly replace the 2004 Master Plan.

Recommended Trail Uses

The recommended trail uses remain the same as those articulated in the 2004 Master Plan:

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is a multi-use trail but the limitations of width dictate that not all uses can be accommodated at all times on the entire length of the trail. The following are the recommended trail uses: bicycling, hiking/walking, cross-country skiing, dog walking, running/jogging, in-line skating, cross-country roller skiing, hunting, snowmobiling, and environmental education/interpretation.

The use of all-terrain vehicles and/or off-highway vehicles is not allowed on the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail or in Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.

Legislative Authorization

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail the trail was legislatively authorized in 2002 (MS 85.015, Subd. 24).

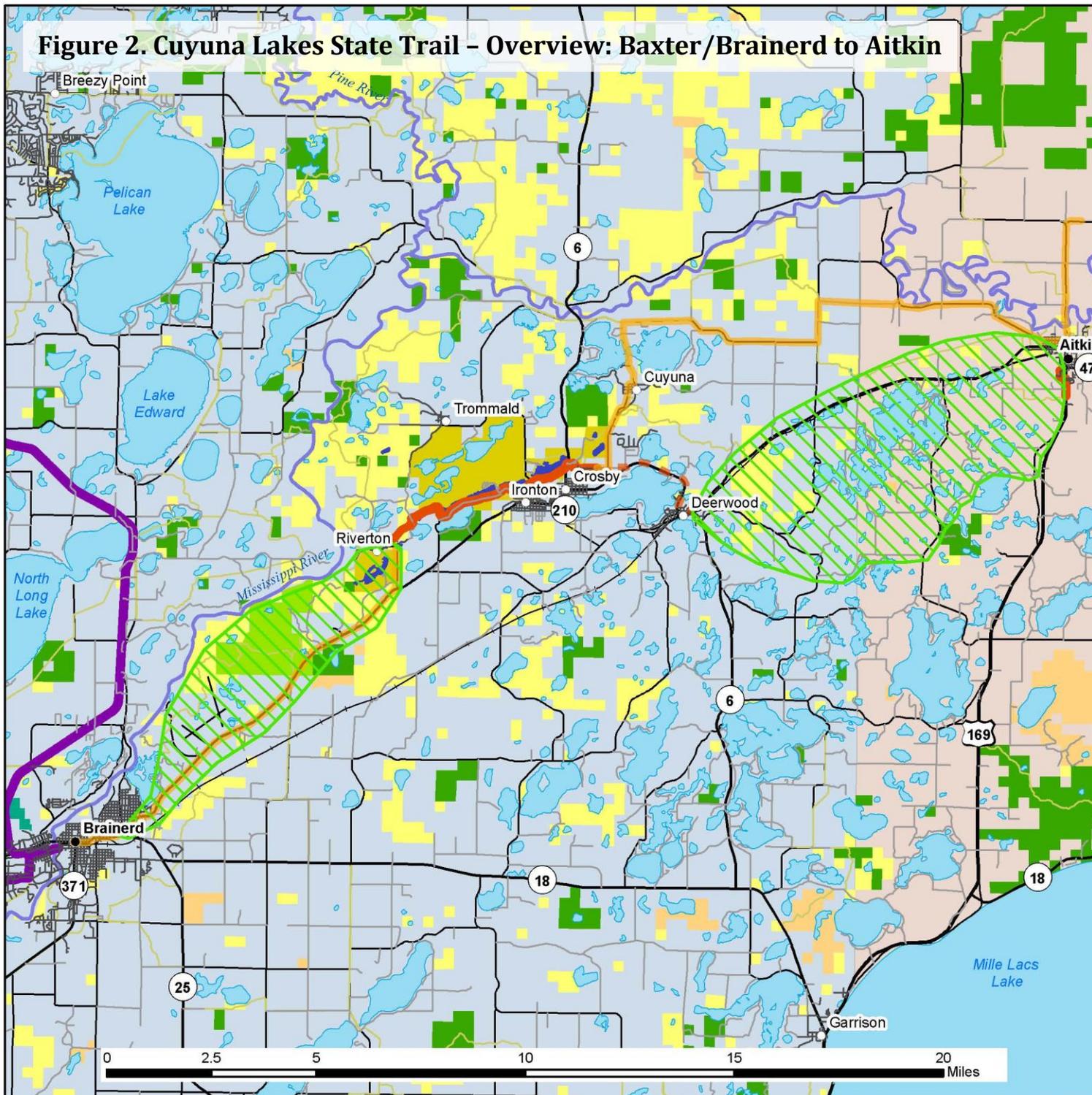
(a) The trail alignments shall originate in Crow Wing County at the Paul Bunyan trail in the city of Baxter and shall extend in an east-northeasterly direction to the city of Riverton, Crow Wing County, where they shall connect to the Sagamore Mine segment of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. The trail alignments shall then continue in a northeasterly direction, generally along and using former railroad rights-of-way insofar as is practical, to connect with the main body of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, the communities of Ironton and Crosby in Crow Wing County, and the Croft Mine historical park. The trail alignments shall then continue in an east-northeasterly direction, generally along and using former railroad rights-of-way insofar as practical, to the city of Cuyuna in Crow Wing County, and then continue east to the city of Aitkin, Aitkin County, and there terminate.

(b) The trail shall be developed as a multiuse, multiseasonal, dual treadway trail.

Figure 1. Minnesota State Trail System



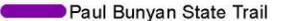
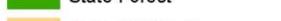
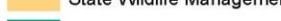
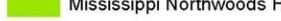
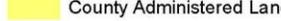
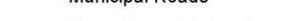
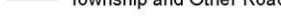
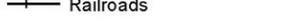
Figure 2. Cuyuna Lakes State Trail - Overview: Baxter/Brainerd to Aitkin



**Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
Overview: Baxter/Brainerd
to Aitkin**

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Legend

-  Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
-  Paul Bunyan State Trail
-  Mississippi River Trail
-  Minnesota Snowmobile Trails
-  Deerwood Extension
-  State Trail Search Areas
-  State Recreation Area
-  State Forest
-  State Wildlife Management Area
-  TNC Preserves, Managed Areas
-  Mississippi Northwoods Habitat Complex
-  County Administered Land
-  Lakes
-  Designated Trout Lakes
-  Aitkin County
-  Crow Wing County
-  Federal Trunk Highways
-  State Trunk Highways
-  County Highways
-  Municipal Roads
-  Township and Other Roads
-  Airport Runways
-  Railroads
-  Minor Cities
-  Small Cities



Overview of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is a legislatively authorized state trail which, when complete, will connect the communities of Baxter and Brainerd to the west with Aitkin to the east. In between, the state trail will connect and travel through multiple Cuyuna Iron Range communities, Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, and other points of interest.

In the 2004 Master Plan, the trail alignment was divided into four planning segments:

1. Baxter to Lum Park in Brainerd
2. Lum Park to Riverton
3. Riverton to Cuyuna
4. Cuyuna to Aitkin

This Master Plan Amendment modifies the third and fourth planning segments (included in the 2004 Master Plan) to “Riverton to Deerwood” and “Deerwood to Aitkin,” respectively. The four segments are outlined below.

Baxter to Lum Park in Brainerd

This segment will connect the communities of Baxter and Brainerd with Lum Park on the south side of Rice Lake.

Thirty-eight acre Lum Park is a popular recreation destination near the northeastern border of Brainerd and Oak Lawn Township, and offers a swimming beach, public water access, a fishing pier, reservable picnic shelters, RV camping, a disc golf course, and other amenities.¹

The City of Brainerd’s Trail Map illustrates both completed and proposed segments of the Cuyuna Lakes (State) Trail.² Almost two miles of the trail is completed from the intersection of W. Laurel St. and NW 4th St. to the intersection of 8th St S. and Washington St. NE/Hwy. 210. Another 0.8-mile segment is completed from the intersection of 5th Ave. NE and Washington St. NE/Hwy. 210 to 14th Ave. NE (Lum Park Rd.) and Hwy. 210.

A 1.2-mile proposed trail segment connects the two completed segments outlined above, from the intersection of 8th St. S and Norwood St. to 13th St. SE and Washington St. NE/Hwy. 210. Developing this relatively short segment would complete the broader Baxter to Lum Park segment.

The 2004 Master Plan outlines trail use and surfacing considerations, local services, park and trail connections, cultural and interpretive opportunities, and other considerations in this and the following trail segments.



Trail signage along College Drive in Brainerd, at the Mississippi River.

¹ City of Brainerd, Parks and Recreation, City Parks, Lum Park. http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/parks/park_lum.htm

² City of Brainerd, Brainerd City Maps, Trail Map. http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/docs/maps/Map_Trails.pdf

Lum Park to Riverton

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is entirely undeveloped between Lum Park and the intersection of Co. Rd. 128 and Rowe Rd. in Riverton.

From Lum Park, the conceptual route travels around the northern end of the Brainerd Lakes Regional Airport through Crow Wing County land and then east toward the Crow Wing County Landfill, through the Mississippi River Northwoods Habitat Complex, also administered by Crow Wing County. According to the 2004 Master Plan, the trail corridor “will then continue in a northeasterly direction along old highway 210, then along the railroad grade to the Sagamore Mine segment of the CCSRA.”



Lum Park offers Brainerd residents and visitors an abundance of recreation opportunities.

It is important to note that appropriation language for the Mississippi Northwoods Habitat Complex requires Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council approval if a paved trail is to be developed on the land³:

Development of a paved trail on land acquired under this paragraph constitutes an alteration of the intended use of the interest in real property and must be handled according to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 15. Any plan, including trail alignment, for the development of a paved trail must be submitted to the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for approval. No paved trail development or paved trail use is allowed unless it is specified in the plan for trail use and alignment approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

Northeast of the county landfill and south of Riverton, the paved state trail is proposed to run along the east side of Sagamore Mine Lake in the Sagamore Unit of Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.⁴

As with other proposed segments of this state trail, the actual alignment will be dependent upon the availability of land and the cooperation of local landowners and communities.

³ ML 2012, Ch. 264, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd 3(b).

<https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/laws/?id=264&doctype=chapter&year=2012&type=0>

⁴ Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation. 2008. *Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area: Recreation Implementation Plan*. St. Paul, MN.

Riverton to Deerwood

As stated previously, this Master Plan Amendment modifies the third trail planning segment (initially described in the 2004 Master Plan) from “Riverton to Cuyuna” to “Riverton to Deerwood”.

Unlike the previous segment, a considerable portion of the Riverton to Deerwood segment has been developed, primarily within Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. More than six miles of trail have been acquired and developed between the intersection of Co. Rd. 128 and Rowe Rd. in Riverton and the intersection of 8th St. NE and 6th Ave. NE in Crosby, near the Hallett Community Center.

According to the 2004 Master Plan, “the route was selected based on availability of right-of-way, appropriate grade and whether winter

plowing will be done. Snowmobile trails will approximately follow existing grant-in-aid snowmobile routes, except where those routes are on the old railroad alignment being converted to the paved trail.

In these areas, the new winter alignment needs to be in place before snowmobiles are not allowed on the paved trail.”

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail passes through Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area where an extensive system of purpose-built mountain bike trails have been developed over the past few years. The state recreation area currently offers more than 20 miles of mountain bike trails that wind up, down and around the former iron mine sites, offering many scenic views and a connection to the past.

Together, the state recreation area and state trail are integrated into the communities of Riverton, Ironton and Crosby, which provide visitors with desired amenities like bike rentals, outdoor gear, and food and beverages. The trail connection to Deerwood will provide a direct link to indoor, overnight accommodations. The state recreation area currently offers camping in the Portsmouth Unit, and there are plans to install three yurts as part of a pilot program in the Yawkey Unit in 2013 or 2014.

As the developed state trail leaves Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and travels east along 8th St NE in Crosby, it passes directly adjacent to Croft Mine Historical Park. Like other areas in the region, the Croft Mine was actively mined for iron ore between 1916 and 1934. When the park is open, generally between Memorial Day and Labor Day, it offers a simulated underground mining tour and a museum has mining artifacts.⁵

Though the primary state trail corridor will no longer travel through the City of Cuyuna on its way to Aitkin, a spur trail to Cuyuna is a stated objective of the Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association and other local partners and stakeholders. The specific alignment of this trail is to-be-determined, but could potentially travel through portions of nearby Crow Wing State Forest and county land. State forest access routes



Overlook just off the paved state trail in Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area.

⁵ Explore Minnesota Tourism. Croft Mine Historical Park. <http://www.exploreminnesota.com/things-to-do/2704/croft-mine-historical-park/details.aspx>

and forest roads offer possible trail alignments and a potential connection between Cuyuna, the state recreation area, and beyond.

The community of Cuyuna is currently raising funds to develop a state-of-the-art “pump track” that will complement mountain bike trail facilities in the nearby state recreation area. A pump track is a continuous circuit of dirt rollers, berms, and jumps that loops back on itself, allowing a mountain biker to ride it continuously.⁶ This type of facility would enhance the broad slate of riding opportunities in the Cuyuna Lakes area, particularly at Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, less than two miles away.

The planned trail extension between Crosby and Deerwood will be addressed in the “Overview of the Trail Extension” section below.

Deerwood to Aitkin

As stated previously, this Master Plan Amendment modifies the fourth trail planning segment (initially described in the 2004 Master Plan) to “Deerwood to Aitkin” from “Cuyuna to Aitkin”.

A specific alignment for this segment has not been determined, but the Cuyuna Lake Trail Association previously identified a series of options. The “preferred route” travels south from Deerwood along MN-6, east along Co. Rd. 10, and then northeast along Country Ln. Even though the preferred route appears to follow specific roadways, the routing is purely conceptual. As with other proposed segments of this state trail, the actual alignment will be dependent upon the availability of land, and the cooperation of local landowners and communities.



Public land in the trail corridor search area between Deerwood and Aitkin.

Narrow road rights-of-way with adjacent lakes and wetlands may pose a challenge to creating a link between Deerwood and Aitkin. On-road bike routes should be considered until a state trail alignment is determined.

Development of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail has already begun on the Aitkin end. According to the Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association, “Phase 1 begins by connecting to the existing walking trail by Rippleside Elementary School. It continues south to run on the west side of Blackrock Road. The trail then crosses over the Ripple River by the Ripple River Motel and then travels south parallel to but separate from Highway 169 and ends at Red Oak Drive. Plans for Phase 2 are underway with the goal of reaching the City-owned ‘Tank Trails’.”⁷

⁶ Singletracks. How to Ride a Pump Track. <http://www.singletracks.com/blog/mtb-training/how-to-ride-a-pump-track/>

⁷ Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association. News. <http://cuyunalakestrail.org/index.cfm/pageid/32>

Overview of the Trail Extension

The DNR, Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association, Crow Wing County, the cities of Crosby and Deerwood, and other local partners and stakeholders have worked closely to identify a preferred trail corridor for the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail between Crosby and Deerwood, a distance of approximately four miles (see Figure 3, page 11).

Depending on the DNR's ability to acquire the necessary easements for the state trail and other considerations, two alternatives have been developed for how the state trail could connect to the TH 6/210 corridor from Crosby (see Figure 4, page 12):

1. From the intersection of 8th St. NE and 6th Ave. NE, the state trail would continue straight east to the intersection of Deer Trail Dr., Agate Rd., and TH 6/210.
2. From the southeast corner of the Cuyuna Range Elementary School property, the state trail would travel north along Cuyuna Rd. and then east to the intersection of Deer Trail Dr., Agate Rd., and TH 6/210.



Under one alternative being considered, the planned state trail extension (yellow dashed line) would travel along the north side of 8th St. NE.

A third alternative trail alignment was considered and dismissed. Under that alternative, the state trail would've traveled south on Cuyuna Rd. to TH 6/210 from the southeast corner of the Cuyuna Range Elementary School property. A property along this route has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places.

Once the state trail reaches TH 6/210 on the east side of Crosby, it was determined that the most realistic route along the north side of Serpent Lake is on the north and east side of the TH 6/210 right-of-way. All of the property owners who abut the trail corridor along this portion of the proposed trail extension have been contacted by the DNR and have approved the siting of the trail.

Prior to the development of this paved trail corridor, cultural resource assessment work needs to be completed north of Serpent Lake.

Routes through the City of Deerwood are dependent on the location of the proposed crossing of TH 6/210 within the City of Deerwood.



As the planned trail extension travels east and south along the north side of Serpent Lake, it passes a local public water access, Serpent Lake - East.

Justification for the Trail Extension

The DNR, Cuyuna Lakes Trail Association, Crow Wing County, the cities of Crosby and Deerwood, and other local partners and stakeholders have been in regular contact about extending the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail into Deerwood. The extension of the state trail to Deerwood from Crosby will provide a safe, off-road transportation route for pedestrian and bicyclists to travel between the two locations. The connection of the state trail and state recreation area to Deerwood will also provide recreation area visitors and state trail users with additional amenities available in the community.

The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail is used by local residents and tourists from across the state who travel to the area to enjoy Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area and other areas of interest. The extension of the state trail to Deerwood is supported by a majority of local trail users, residents and businesses.

Trails have a positive impact on local economies

Communities that support recreational trails and respond to the needs of trail users have seen positive impacts on their local economies. DNR trail studies indicate that tourists attracted to the trails use local facilities for eating, shopping and lodging.

The DNR estimates that for five state trails surveyed between 2007 and 2009, summer spending totaled nearly \$5 million.⁸ Most of that spending (95% in total) comes from the trail users who reside outside the local economy of the trail, and the spending represents “new” dollars to the local economy. Trail users who have traveled a long distance to the trail, not surprisingly, outspend local users by a factor

of about 20 on a daily basis, primarily on food, travel, and overnight accommodations.

Trails promote healthy lifestyles

The trail extension will provide additional opportunities for people to exercise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s *Trails for Health: Promoting Healthy Lifestyles & Environments* states that “providing access to places for physical activity, such as trails, increases the level of physical activity in a community”, leading to a healthier community. Because the trail extension will connect Deerwood to regional focal points – including the Hallett Community Center, Cuyuna Range Elementary School, Cuyuna Regional Medical Center, and the Heartwood Senior Living facility – it will be safer and easier for residents to walk or bicycle to school, work, and other areas of interest.



Outdoor recreation enthusiast.



The Heartwood Senior Living facility is just south of the existing state trail terminus in Crosby.

⁸ Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Division of Trails and Waterways. Office of Management and Budget Services. Status of Summer Trail Use (2007-09) on Five Paved State Bicycle Trails and Trends Since the 1990s. <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/trails/5trailstudies10.pdf>

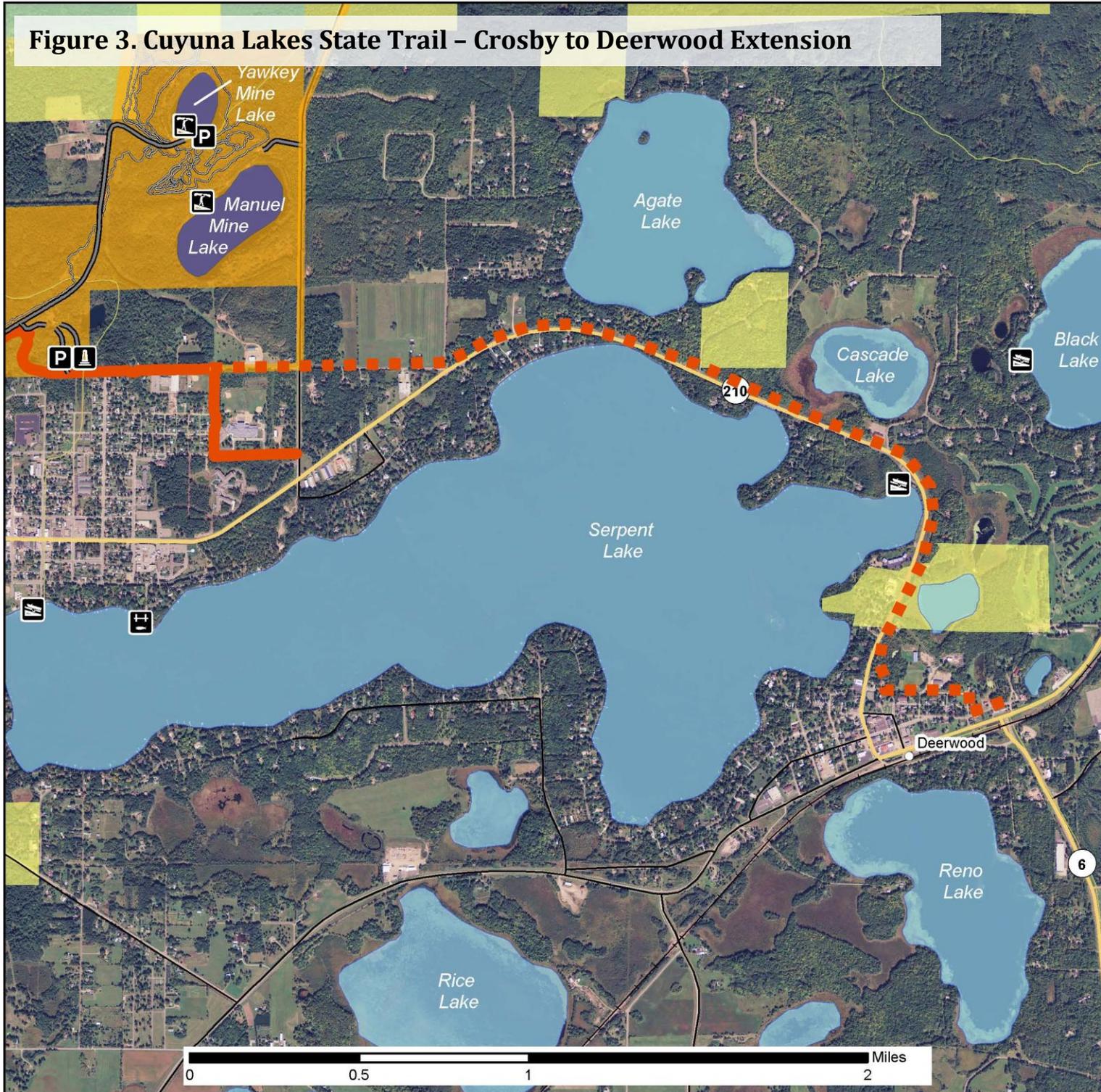
The trail extension meets the goals laid out in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan*

The 25-year *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* includes several strategies to enhance trails of state and regional significance for commuting. Recent studies have shown that trail development increases commuting and the most common form is by bicycle. Bicycle commuting leads to improved air quality due to reduced emissions, reduced traffic congestions, and improved health and monetary savings for the individual commuter. The strategies identified in the *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* to enhance trails for commuting are:

- Support existing state and regional trails to better serve commuters;
- Expand existing state and regional trails as well as develop new trails to better serve commuters;
- When redeveloping bridges and roads, accommodate commuter access wherever feasible;
- Ensure state and regional trails are part of a statewide network to maximize their value for commuting;
- Develop closer cooperation and understanding between transportation and recreation staff, including cross-training and cooperative projects; and
- Partner with local trail providers to promote commuting opportunities



Figure 3. Cuyuna Lakes State Trail – Crosby to Deerwood Extension



**Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
Crosby to Deerwood**

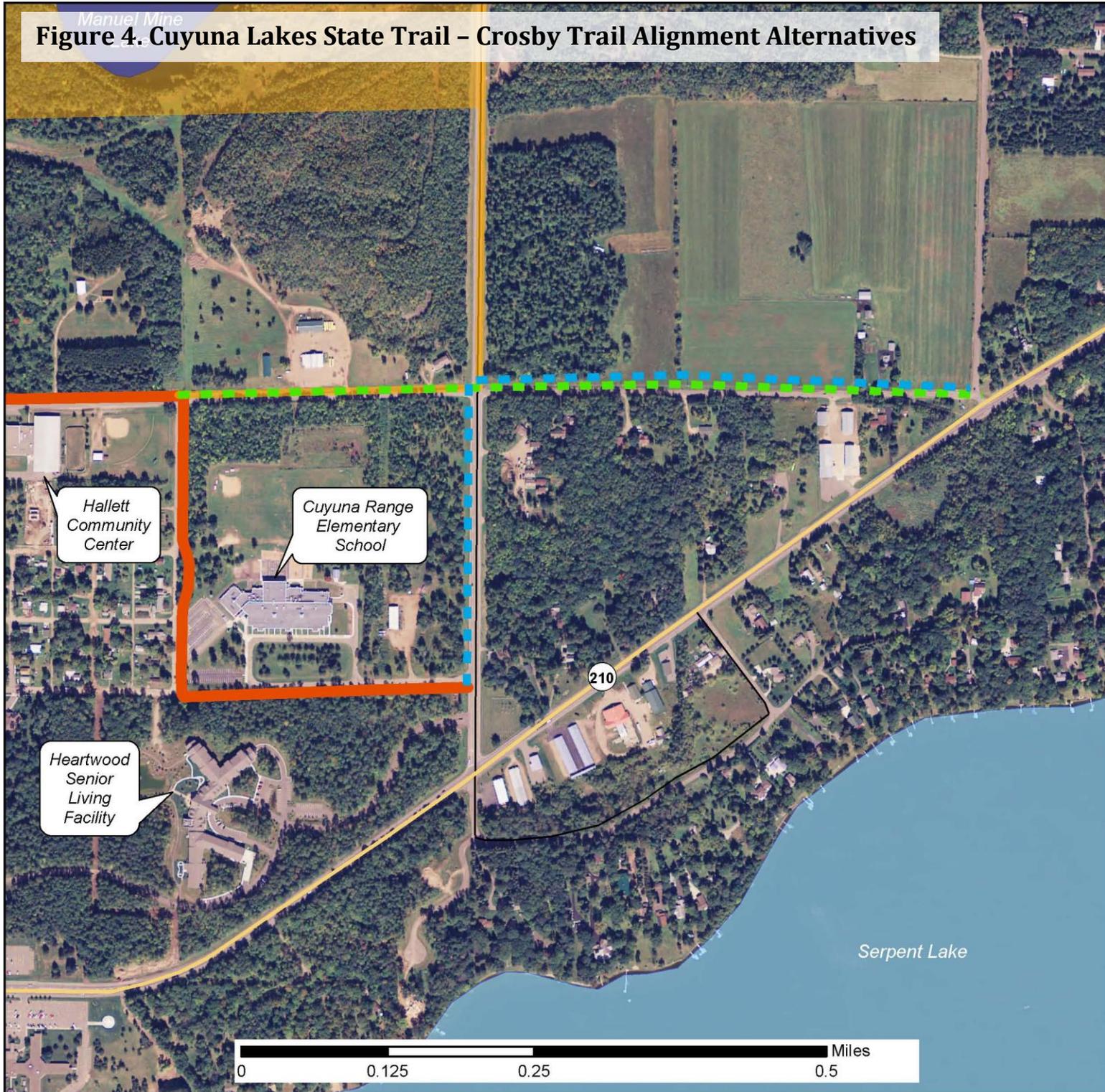
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Legend

- Planned Extension of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail (Preferred Alternative)
- Mississippi River Trail
- State Park Roads
- Mountain Bike Trails
- State Trunk Highways
- Minnesota Snowmobile Trails
- Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
- County Highways
- Designated Trout Lakes
- Lakes
- Cuyuna Country SRA
- County Administered Land
- State Forest
- P Parking
- ⚠ Croft Mine
- ⚓ Water Access (Carry-in)
- 🚚 Water Access (Trailer)
- 🎣 Fishing Pier



Manuel Mine
Figure 4. Cuyuna Lakes State Trail – Crosby Trail Alignment Alternatives



**Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
 Crosby Trail Alignment
 Alternatives**

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Legend

- ■ ■ Alternate Trail Location No. 1 (Preferred Alternative)
- ■ ■ Alternate Trail Location No. 2
- Cuyuna Lakes State Trail
- Mississippi River Trail
- Cuyuna Country SRA
- Designated Trout Lakes
- Lakes
- State Trunk Highways
- County Highways

Hallett Community Center

Cuyuna Range Elementary School

Heartwood Senior Living Facility

210

Serpent Lake



City of Deerwood

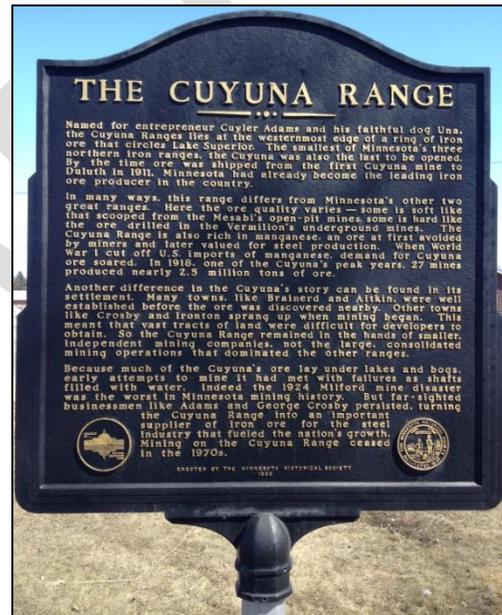
History

Following the passage of the Railroad Aid bill (1857) and the Homestead Act (1862), Deerwood became an enticing place to settle for those who were willing to farm the land for at least five years⁹. The area boomed as the Northern Pacific Railroad forged through this area with an expansion from Carlton to Brainerd. The first depot was built in 1871. As more settlers arrived, the Village grew and gave birth to the Cuyuna Range. Cuyler Adams of Deerwood discovered the iron ore that started the mining boom. In 1909 the village petitioned to be recognized as an organized city. On a record of business listings in 1913, there were over 100 businesses accommodating all the needs of the citizens.

In early 1933, the local newspaper began a public discussion on the need for a community building to exemplify the pride of the area citizens. In 1935, construction of the Deerwood Auditorium began with the help of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and local labor. Work was completed in 1936, offering a multi-purpose hall accommodating up to 500 people. At the time, the Deerwood Auditorium housed the village council chambers, kitchen, locker rooms, library and the village fire department. In 2010, renovations enhanced the building's historic appearance.

The Community Today

With a population of 532 (2010 Census), the City of Deerwood is defined by a three square mile area with several lakes providing high quality, scenic recreation opportunities. Deerwood's city departments include the City Clerk/Administration, public works, police and fire. The community has a playground, swimming beach, ball field, picnic area and the Deerwood Auditorium.



Signage along TH 6/210 welcomes and educates visitors.

⁹City of Deerwood, Minnesota. <http://cityofdeerwood.com/>

Dual Treadways

As outlined on the third page of this master plan amendment, the legislative authorization of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail includes the following language: “the trail shall be developed as a multiuse, multiseasonal, dual treadway trail.” However, the development of paved and unpaved treadways immediately adjacent to one another is not always possible.

According to the 2004 Master Plan, the following criteria guide the location of this state trail alignment:

- “The paved trail will use abandoned railroad alignments where available. These routes offer the gentle grades required to support a diverse group of bikers, in-line skaters, walkers, and runners. Wherever practical, the paved and unpaved alignments will be separated in a manner that minimizes dust and debris from collecting on the paved alignment.
- Where former railroad alignments are not available, alternative alignments will favor the use of public right-of-way, or other existing disturbed corridors where practical. However, paved alignments will favor routes away from vehicular traffic routes for safety and for an improved trail experience.
- Existing DNR grant-in-aid snowmobile trails will be retained without change as the preferred non-paved alignment, wherever practical. If a snowmobile trail is displaced, alternatives for a permanent unpaved alignment will be considered.”



At the Rowe Road trailhead in Riverton, the snowmobile trail (left) veers north and then parallels the state trail (right) as both treadways travel east toward Ironton. There are several snowmobile and state trail intersections along the alignment.



Treadway intersection just west of the Huntington Mine.

This set of criteria - and the third criterion specifically – is not altered by the development of this master plan amendment. Simply, this master plan amendment clarifies that, where dual trail treadways are not possible to develop – due to limitations including private property, wetlands, and other constraints – a single treadway may be provided and utilized by a variety of trail users in all seasons, including snowmobiles when sufficient snowfall is present.

Recommendations

Trail Development and Maintenance

- *Complete cultural resource assessment work between Crosby and Deerwood immediately.*
- *Develop the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail extension to current American with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.*
- *Additional maintenance funds will be required to maintain the trail after it is developed. Pursue the development of a Joint Powers Agreement with local government units to monitor, inspect, and maintain the state trail and its corridor.*

Information and Education

- *Community services information, trail orientation, trail rules and trail courtesy information should be developed and installed on a kiosk in Deerwood.*
- *Parks and Trails staff should cooperate with local schools to use the trail for environmental education purposes.*



Trailhead kiosk

Public Review

The draft amendment was available for public review from June 10 to July 10, 2013. Copies of the amendment were available for review at the Brainerd and Ironton (Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area) DNR offices and online. XX comments were received during the public review period. *Insert high-level summary of comments received and action taken.*

During the 30-day public review, a public open house meeting was held at the Hallett Community Center in Crosby on June 20 for local residents to learn more about the trail extension, ask questions, and provide input on the master plan amendment. *Insert approximate number of attendees and reiterate general tenor of comments.*



Hallett Community Center, Crosby