

Frequently Asked Questions: David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail Master Plan

What is a State Trail? What is the David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail? Where does it go?

Minnesota state trails are authorized by the legislature to connect units of the outdoor recreation system or provides access to other areas which have significant scenic, historic, scientific or recreational qualities. The David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail was authorized in 1975 and is a 135-mile long natural surface trail connecting the David Dill/Taconite State Trail, just west of Tower to the Blue Ox Trail, just south of International Falls.

What is a master plan? What should I expect to see in it once completed?

A master plan is a guidance document for a unit, such as a state trail. The document outlines what uses are permitted along the trail and how the DNR will manage those uses. A master plan will also discuss other features such as trail connections and ecological conditions along the trail. Once completed, you should expect to see what forms of recreation will be allowed along the trail and a strategy for the DNR to manage those uses. The master plan will not automatically open the entire trail to all uses. Some areas may be deemed too wet for summer use while other areas may require upgrades to allow for summer use. Some winter uses may be incompatible with other winter uses. The master plan simply provides an avenue for the DNR to open the trail, or sections of the trail, to the permitted uses.

What planning has been done in the past?

The DNR completed a master plan for the trail in 1980. This plan was revised in 1983. A master plan for the David Dill/Taconite State Trail, which provides a southern connection to the David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail, was completed in 2017. In 2015, the DNR's Parks and Trails Division completed a system plan for units that it manages, including state trails. In the system plan, the David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail was identified as a division-led core trail. This means that the Parks and Trails Division will continue to provide investments for a safe and enjoyable experience for trail users.

How is the David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail currently used?

Snowmobiling is the primary use for the trail. Other uses include cross country skiing, snowshoeing, fat-tire biking, mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding and hunting and fishing access.

Who manages the trail? What about the land the trail is on?

The trail is managed by the DNR Parks and Trails Division. Because of the length of the David Dill/Arrowhead State Trail, there are multiple land managers along it. The majority of the trail crosses public lands that are managed by the DNR Divisions of Forestry, Parks and Trails and Ecological and Water Resources as well as the US Forest Service and County. The rest of the trail crosses private lands where the DNR has an agreement with the land owner for the trail.

Why do a new master plan?

Since the first master plan was completed, recreation trends have changed. For example, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) were in their infancy when the first master plan was completed. Today, ATVs are a highly popular form of trail recreation. Today, fat-tire biking is quickly becoming popular. Because recreation is ever evolving, the DNR frequently reviews its masterplans for state parks and state trails. By reviewing the current master plan and completing a new one, the DNR may adapt to those changes.

How can I be involved?

You can be involved by submitting your ideas and suggestions during the initial scoping period between August 22, 2019 and September 18, 2019 or by attending an information session on September 4, 2019 in Cook. If you have a comment, you may email it to joe.unger@state.mn.us or mail it to Joe Unger, Parks and Trails, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155. Parks and Trails may also reach out to interested clubs and organizations to get feedback from their membership. Before the plan is completed, you will have the opportunity to review and comment on a final draft.