

ATTACHMENTS

Blazing Star State Trail, Myre-Big Island State Park to Hayward

Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Public Review Period: December 23, 2013 – January 22, 2013

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Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Box 25

500 Lafayette Road

St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4025

Phone: (651) 259-5109 E-mail: lisa.joyal@state.mn.us

July 29, 2013

Correspondence # ERDB 20130293

Ms. Diane Anderson
MN DNR Parks and Trails Division
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed Blazing Star State Trail – Myre-Big Island Stage Park to Hayward, Freeborn County

Dear Ms. Anderson,

As requested, the Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System has been queried to determine if any rare species or other significant natural features are known to occur within an approximate one-mile radius of the proposed project. Based on this query, rare features have been documented within the search area (for details, see the enclosed database reports; please visit the Rare Species Guide at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/rsg/index.html> for more information on the biology, habitat use, and conservation measures of these rare species). Please note that the following **rare features may be adversely affected** by the proposed project:

- Blanding's turtles (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a state-listed threatened species, have been reported from the vicinity of the proposed project (just outside the one-mile radius) and may be encountered on site. For your information, I have attached a Blanding's turtle fact sheet that describes the habitat use and life history of this species. The fact sheet also provides two lists of recommendations for avoiding and minimizing impacts to this rare turtle. Please refer to the first list of recommendations for your project. If greater protection for turtles is desired, the second list of additional recommendations can also be implemented. In addition, if erosion control blankets will be used, we recommend that they be limited to 'bio-netting' or 'natural-netting' types as the plastic mesh netting can be dangerous to reptiles (please see enclosed fact sheet).

The attached flyer should be given to all contractors working in the area. If Blanding's turtles are found on the site, please remember that state law and rules prohibit the destruction of threatened or endangered species, except under certain prescribed conditions. If turtles are in imminent danger they should be moved by hand out of harm's way, otherwise they should be left undisturbed.

- Rare plants and a colonial waterbird nesting area have been documented within Myre-Big Island State Park. However, given the nature and location of the proposed project, I do not believe the project will negatively affect any known occurrences of these rare species. Park staff may have additional information on rare species locations that are not in the NHIS.
- The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) identified a Dry Sand – Gravel Oak Savanna adjacent to the proposed project in T102N R20W Section 7. This type of native plant community has a conservation status rank of S1S2, indicating that it is imperiled to critically imperiled within Minnesota. The MBS considered this area for biodiversity significance, but it was determined to be below the minimum biodiversity threshold in part because the open areas of the site were dominated by non-native vegetation. Areas ranked as Below by MBS may have conservation value at the local level as habitat for native plants and animals, corridors for animal movements, buffers surrounding higher quality natural areas, or as areas with high potential for restoration of native habitat. The savanna was identified by MBS in 1980 and is within Myre-Big Island State Park. Park staff may have additional information on the current status of this native plant community.

- The Environmental Assessment Worksheet should address whether the proposed project has the potential to adversely affect the above rare features and, if so, any avoidance or mitigation measures that will be implemented.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available, and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare or otherwise significant species, native plant communities, and other natural features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and thus does not represent all of the occurrences of rare features within the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

The enclosed results include an Index Report and a Detailed Report of records in the Rare Features Database, the main database of the NHIS. To control the release of specific location information, which might result in the destruction of a rare feature, both reports are copyrighted.

The Index Report provides rare feature locations only to the nearest section, and may be reprinted, unaltered, in an environmental review document (e.g., EAW or EIS), municipal natural resource plan, or report compiled by your company for the project listed above. If you wish to reproduce the index report for any other purpose, please contact me to request written permission. **The Detailed Report is for your personal use only as it may include specific location information that is considered nonpublic data under *Minnesota Statutes*, section 84.0872, subd. 2. If you wish to reprint or publish the Detailed Report for any purpose, please contact me to request written permission.**

For environmental review purposes, the Natural Heritage letter and database reports are valid for one year; they are only valid for the project location (noted above) and the project description provided on the NHIS Data Request Form. Please contact me if project details change or if an updated review is needed.

Please note that locations of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), state-listed as special concern, and the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), federally-listed as threatened, are not currently tracked in the NHIS. As such, the Natural Heritage Review does not address these species.

Furthermore, the Natural Heritage Review does not constitute review or approval by the Department of Natural Resources as a whole. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential effects to these rare features. Additional rare features for which we have no data may be present in the project area, or there may be other natural resource concerns associated with the proposed project. For these concerns, please contact your DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist (contact information available at http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/ereview/erp_regioncontacts.html). Please be aware that additional site assessments or review may be required. Thank you for consulting us on this matter, and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,



Lisa Joyal
Endangered Species Review Coordinator

enc. Rare Features Database: Index Report
Rare Features Database: Detailed Report
Rare Features Database Reports: An Explanation of Fields
Blanding's Turtle Fact Sheet and Flyer
Wildlife Friendly Erosion Control

cc: Kevin Mixon

From: [Thomas Cinadr](#)
To: [Anderson, Diane \(DNR\)](#)
Subject: Re: Request for SHPO Database Search - Blazing Star State Trail Proj.
Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2013 10:11:28 AM
Attachments: [Archaeology.rtf](#)
[Historic.rtf](#)

THIS EMAIL IS NOT A PROJECT CLEARANCE.

This message simply reports the results of the cultural resources database search you requested. The database search produced results for only previously known archaeological sites and historic properties. Please read the note below carefully.

Archaeological sites and historic properties were identified in a search of the Minnesota Archaeological Inventory and Historic Structures Inventory for the search area requested. **Reports containing the results of the search are attached.**

The result of this database search provides a listing of recorded archaeological sites and historic architectural properties that are included in the current SHPO databases. Because the majority of archaeological sites in the state and many historic architectural properties have not been recorded, important sites or structures may exist within the search area and may be affected by development projects within that area. Additional research, including field survey, may be necessary to adequately assess the area's potential to contain historic properties.

If you require a comprehensive assessment of a project's potential to impact archaeological sites or historic architectural properties, you may need to hire a qualified archaeologist and/or historian. If you need assistance with a project review, please contact Kelly Gragg-Johnson in Review and Compliance @ 651-259-3455 or by email at kelly.graggjohnson@mnhs.org.

The Minnesota SHPO Survey Manuals and Database Metadata and Contractor Lists can be found at <http://www.mnhs.org/shpo/survey/inventories.htm>

**SHPO research hours are 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM Tuesday-Friday.
The Office is closed on Mondays.**

Tom Cinadr
Survey and Information Management Coordinator
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Blvd. West
St. Paul, MN 55102

651-259-3453

On Tue, Jun 25, 2013 at 2:38 PM, Anderson, Diane (DNR)
<diane.k.anderson@state.mn.us> wrote:

Dear Mr. Cinadr,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is in the process of preparing an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for proposed development of the Blazing Star State Trail, from Myre-Big Island State Park to Hayward, in Freeborn County. Please accept this email and project description as my request for a database search for archaeological, historical and architectural districts or structures within the project area (please see attached maps, shapefiles).

Project description: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources proposes to extend the Blazing Star State Trail 2.4 miles from Myre-Big Island State Park to Hayward in Freeborn County. The trail will consist of a 10-foot wide bituminous surface with two-foot shoulders for pedestrian, bicycle and other non-motorized uses, and requires a new bridge crossing Albert Lea Lake. The 100-foot single span pedestrian bridge will be adjacent and parallel to the existing railroad bridge, and will require lake and wetland fill exceeding one acre (about 1.9 acres). The trail will be developed primarily on state land acquired for trail purposes, with short segments located in state and city parks. Trail development will include conversion of agricultural land to native vegetation and bituminous trail; wetland to upland and bituminous trail; natural area to bituminous trail; and public waters to upland and bituminous trail. Also, approximately 0.7 miles of existing aggregate surfaced trail will be resurfaced with bituminous (within Myre-Big Island State Park). Land acquisition for the trail is proposed to include over an additional 40-acres of land, primarily for purposes of native plant restoration and enhancement. This includes the conversion of agricultural lands back to native prairie or wetland, as appropriate.

The project is located near the city of Albert Lea, in the following sections of Hayward Township, Freeborn County:

Sections 7, 8, 9; Twp 102N; Range 20W and

Sections 12, 13, Twp 102N, Range 21W (resurfacing 0.7 mi existing aggregate to asphalt within park)

Attached are project maps (PDFs) for your reference, as well as GIS shapefiles for the proposed trail route and project area.

If you need additional data or have any issues with the attachments, please contact me.

Thank you,

Diane K. Anderson, Principal Planner
DNR, Division of Parks & Trails
500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4039
Phone: 651-259-5614;

Archaeological Site Locations

Site Number	Site Name	Twp.	Range	Sec.	Quarter Sections	Acres	Phase	Site Description	Tradition	Context	Reports	NR	CEF	DOE
County: Freeborn														
21FE0013	Westland	102	20	7	W-NW-NW-SE	3	1	LS	A-2					
21FE0025		102	21	13	W-SW-NW, NW-NW-NW-SW	18	1	LS			FE-85-01			
		102	21	13	W-SW-NW, NW-NW-NW-SW	18	1	LS			FE-81-01			
21FE0028	Aitchinson	102	20	7	C-N-NW-NW	2	2	LS	W-2		MCH-84-01			
21FE0031	Pioneer Camp	102	21	13	E-SW-SE-SE	8	1	AS			FE-02-02			
	Pioneer Camp	102	21	13	E-SW-SE-SE	8	1	AS			FE-85-01			
21FE0032		102	21	12	SE-NW-SE	3	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0033		102	21	12	NW-NW-SW-SE	1	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0034		102	21	12	SE-NE-SW-SE, SW-NW-SE-SE	2	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0035		102	21	12	NW-SE-SW-SE	1	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0036		102	21	12	E-SE-SE, E-SW-SE-SE	11	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0037		102	20	7	SW-SW, W-W-SE-SW	25	1	AS,SR	A-1,W-1	RA-1	FE-85-01			
		102	20	7	SW-SW, W-W-SE-SW	25	1	AS,SR	A-1,W-1	RA-1	FE-02-01			
21FE0039		102	21	13	SE-SE-SE-NE, NE-NE-NE-SE	3	1	LS			FE-85-01			
21FE0040		102	21	12	SW-SW-SE, SE-SE-SW	42	1	AS			FE-85-01			
		102	21	13	E-NE-NE-NW, NW-NE	42	1	AS			FE-85-01			
21FE0041		102	21	13	NW-NE-SW, E-NE-NW-SW	10	1	AS			FE-85-01			
21FE0042		102	21	13	SE-NE-SW	34.4	1	AS	W-1		FE-85-01			
		102	21	13	S-SW	34.4	1	AS	W-1		FE-85-01			

Site Number	Site Name	Twp.	Range	Sec.	Quarter Sections	Acres	Phase	Site Description	Tradition	Context	Reports	NR	CEF	DOE
County:	Freeborn													
21FE0065	Lower White Fox Campground	102	21	13	SW-NE-SW	0.6	1	LS						
21FEe		102	21	13	E-SE-NE	9		AS						
21FEf		102	21	13	SW-SE-SE-NE, SE- SW-SE-NE	2		AS						
21FEg		102	21	13	SW-SE-NW	5		EW						
21FEj		102	21	13	W-NE-NE-SE	2		SR						

History/Architecture Inventory

PROPERTY NAME	ADDRESS	Twp	Range	Sec	Quarters	USGS	Report	NRHP	CEF	DOE	Inventory Number
COUNTY: Freeborn											
CITY/TOWNSHIP: Hayward											
Vegger Gulbrandson Hardware Store	Main St. & 3rd St.	102	20	9	SE-NW-SW	Hayward	FE-85-1H				FE-HAY-001
CITY/TOWNSHIP: Hayward Twp.											
school (moved)	off Co. Rd. 46	102	20	9	NW-NW-	Hayward	FE-85-1H				FE-HRD-003
Hayward Depot (moved)		102	20	9	NW-NW-	Hayward	FE-85-1H				FE-HRD-004
creamery	off Co. Hwy. 26	102	20	8	NE-NE-SE	Hayward	FE-85-1H				FE-HRD-005