

Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail Master Plan Amendment

Trail extension from Harmony to the Iowa state border and Niagara Cave

Where is the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail located? How long is the current trail?

The existing Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail (HPVST) is located in Fillmore County in southeast, Minnesota. This multi-use, paved recreational trail is currently developed for approximately 18 miles from its northern end point at the junction with the Root River State Trail, north of Preston, to its southern end point, at the Harmony-Preston Valley Trailhead Park in the City of Harmony.



What is a master plan amendment?

Amendments to state trail master plans and state park management plans are prepared to address changes proposed for a unit that would vary from the existing, approved master or management plan, such as adding new facilities, changing trail uses, or extending state trails. Master plans and amendments are developed through an open public process, in partnership with local communities, park and trail users, and interested citizens, in compliance with Minnesota Statute [86A.09](#).

When was the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail first planned and developed?

The Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail was first legislatively authorized in 1992 with significant support from local communities. In 1995, the original master plan was completed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and briefly mentions the idea of extending the state trail to the Iowa state border, but did not include specifics or discussion of resources for a proposed route. In 1997, construction began, and the bituminous (paved) trail surface was completed in 1998 from Harmony to the Root River State Trail, north of Preston. Also in 1998, the Trailhead Park was constructed in the City of Harmony, which serves trail users and the community.

What changes are being proposed to the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail?

This amendment addresses a proposed trail extension, that will consist of a 10-foot wide bituminous (asphalt/paved) surfaced trail for a distance of approximately 6.0 miles, including a 0.5 mile trail segment connecting to Niagara Cave.

No changes in trail uses are proposed. The Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail will continue to be developed and managed for non-motorized uses, consistent with the previously developed segments of the trail. Trail uses include walking/hiking, bicycling and in-line skating, and cross country skiing.

Who manages the trail? Who is responsible for maintaining the completed trail?

Minnesota DNR, Parks and Trails division, is responsible for the long-term maintenance, care and operation of the state trail. The DNR may contract with third parties to assist with maintenance as needed, such as for short term or emergency needs.

How was the proposed trail extension route determined?

The City of Harmony and local stakeholders have been actively involved in this project. They have identified and established a route from Harmony to the Iowa border and Niagara Cave, secured funding, and acquired private property for the proposed trail extension. (See Amendment, Figure 4.)

In 2015, the authorizing statute ([M.S. 85.015, Subd. 7](#)) for the Blufflands trail system was amended by the Minnesota State Legislature to specifically include, “connections to the Iowa border including a connection to Niagara Cave in Fillmore County”. A master plan amendment is needed to address the proposed extension and updated statute for the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail as part of the Blufflands trail system. The amendment will be completed prior to any construction activities, in compliance with Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Act, [M.S. 86A.09](#).

How is this trail extension being funded?

In 2018, the Legislative and Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) awarded the City of Harmony \$235,000 for land acquisitions for the proposed trail extension corridor. Also in 2018, at the request of the local stakeholder group, MN DNR received a \$1,500,000 state capital bonding appropriation to be used for design, engineering and construction of the trail extension. In June 2021, the project was awarded Federal Recreational Trail Program (F RTP) grant of \$150,000 for trail construction.

When will development begin? When will the new trail extension be open to public use?

Proposed development and construction activity will begin after the master plan amendment is adopted and when engineering and design plans are completed and approved by the DNR. At the time of this publication, DNR is anticipating that development will begin in 2022. The new trail extension will be open for public use immediately upon completion of construction.

Will there be connections to other recreational trails in Iowa?

The proposed trail route to the Iowa state border is anticipated to connect with local trail connections from Cresco and/or Decorah, Iowa. Recreational trail systems in Iowa have expressed interest and provided support for connecting to the Minnesota state trail system. Howard County, Iowa, is currently conducting a feasibility study for potential routes connecting to Minnesota trails and other points of interest, such as Niagara Cave and Harmony.

How can I be involved? Where can I get more information and provide comments?

You can be involved by reviewing the draft plan and submitting your comments during the public review period from July 27 to August 27, 2021; or by attending the open house meeting on August 12, from 5-7 p.m. at the Harmony Community Center, 225 3rd Ave. S.W., Harmony, MN 55939.

Comments on the amendment can be submitted using the [online form \(click here\)](#) or use a cell phone camera to scan the QR code symbol to the right; or send by U.S. Mail to: Diane Anderson, DNR Parks and Trails, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155-4039. Comments are due by August 27, 2021.



For more information about the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail Master Plan Amendment, visit the [DNR web page \(click here\)](#), or contact Diane Anderson by email: diane.k.anderson@state.mn.us.