

# NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL TRAILWAY PLAN

Analysis of Alternatives  
and  
Environmental Assessment  
Columbiana and Carroll Counties, Ohio

Prepared by

National Park Service  
Ice Age, North Country, and Lewis and Clark National Trails  
Madison, Wisconsin

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**Executive Summary**

This document analyzes four alternatives, including the no action alternative, to the question of routing and developing the North Country National Scenic Trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties, Ohio.

In March 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). To date, Congress has authorized the establishment of eight National Scenic Trails--long distance, non motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas. National Scenic Trails are patterned after the renowned Appalachian NST.

Members of the North Country Trail Association in Columbiana and Carroll Counties invited the National Park Service to conduct a planning process to determine the route of the trail across the county. The members had spent several years seeking landowner permission and building support along the route following the old tow path for the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal as defined in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982*. A planning team was formed to investigate alternatives and conduct a public involvement process. Four alternatives plus the no action alternative resulted from the scoping and evaluation process (Attachments 6A, 6B, 6C, and 6D). The preferred alternative, Alternative 1, totals 60.5 miles across Columbiana and Carroll Counties (Attachment 7). Of this total, approximately 9.5 miles traverse public lands, 3 miles are on public sidewalks and/or greenways, and 48 miles cross private property.

Since there are many private holdings that the North Country NST must cross in both counties and because of the general philosophy and purpose of a NST, the planning team is recommending a trail for foot travel only. This would include such winter uses as snowshoeing, and limited, ungroomed cross-country skiing. Development of a low impact, foot travel only trail using the careful design and construction techniques discussed herein will result in only minimal impacts.

Locating and constructing a new trail across Columbiana and Carroll Counties may produce both positive benefits and negative consequences. Negative impacts on the human environment are

generally limited to a perceived, slight increase in what are collectively called nuisance impacts. Adjoining landowners typically have fears about loss of privacy, vandalism, and littering when a new trail is being planned. Past experience and formal studies have shown these fears to be groundless as the perceived impacts do not develop after the trail is constructed. What trail users and neighboring landowners normally experience as the most important benefits of a trail are health, fitness, and recreation opportunities. Other advantages include aesthetic beauty, open space, natural resource protection, and in some instances, higher property resale values. Also, local communities may even experience bolstered economies and increased local pride. The new trail is predicted to have a minimum impact on the natural and cultural environments. These slight impacts are further discussed in Section VIII--Affected Environment and Impacts.

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## **I. Introduction and Background Information**

In March 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). It is one of only eight trails authorized by Congress to be National Scenic Trails. Patterned after the renowned Appalachian Trail, NSTs are long distance, non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas.

In many ways, the North Country NST is similar in concept to the Appalachian NST. Yet in other ways, it is uniquely different as it takes the visitor through a diverse series of landscapes rather than following a mountain range. When completed, the North Country NST will extend approximately 3,200 miles from the vicinity of Crown Point, New York, to Lake Sakakawea State Park, on the Missouri River, in North Dakota (Attachment 1), where it joins the route of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Currently, more than 1,298 miles of the trail are in place and certified as meeting the standards of a NST. Another 800-1,000 miles, some of which are on roads, are walkable but not yet certified.

The National Park Service is responsible for overall administration of the North Country NST. Actual development and management of the trail are intended to be partnership ventures accomplished through many cooperating Federal, State, and local agencies, and private trail organizations. When viewed in this manner, it shows that the North Country NST is truly a cooperative endeavor.

When Congress established the trail, a very general route was delineated. A slightly more refined, but still general route was shown in *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982* which envisioned approximately 60 miles of the trail route passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties in East Central Ohio from Negley to Minerva (Attachment 3).

Currently, approximately 6.3 miles of the trail exist within Beaver Creek State Park (S.P.) where portions of the Vondergreen and Dogwood Trails were certified as North Country Trail in 1983. The balance of the route across both counties is located primarily on private property and has not yet been developed. The purpose of this plan is to identify a specific corridor within which a permanent trail can be established, and thereby guide agencies and private volunteer organizations to secure a route for the trail.

## **II. Purpose of the Environmental Assessment**

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires consideration of the environmental effects of proposed Federal actions, in this case the National Park Service's proposal to select a specific alignment for a North Country NST route across Columbiana and Carroll Counties.

This assessment serves to:

- A. Comply with all provisions regarding environmental considerations and public involvement required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by carrying out an open, public planning process to determine the ideal location for the trail and to identify and address public issues and concerns.
- B. Comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- C. Comply with consultation requirements established in the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
- D. Comply with Executive Order 11988--Floodplain Management and Executive Order 11990--Protection of Wetlands.
- E. Provide information on the physical and social environment through which the trail passes for the local trail clubs and the counties to use as they plan the physical location, construction, and subsequent maintenance of the trail.
- F. Foster public involvement in developing and managing the trail, including recognition and possibly adoption of the trail by public and private land use planning groups.

### **III. Description of Columbiana and Carroll Counties, and Their Vicinity**

Columbiana and Carroll Counties are located in the east-central portion of Ohio within a one hundred and twenty-mile radius of Canton, Akron, Cleveland, Columbus; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Wheeling, West Virginia (Attachment 2). Both counties are predominantly rural with small communities scattered throughout the area. The vast majority of land within the unincorporated portions of both counties is used either partially or totally for agricultural purposes, as cropland, fallow fields, or forest.

Columbiana County is 535 square miles. The population is approximately 108,276. Although the county is one of Ohio's oldest, it remains basically rural with its largest city being East Liverpool with 16,700 residents. The central portion of the county, where the trail route is mainly located, is crossed by a terminal moraine created by the Grand River Lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier, and embraces parts or all of West, Hanover, Center, Elkrun, and Middleton Townships. The lower slopes of the hills are moderately steep, but the upper slopes are more gentle. The ice invasion had a general smoothing influence, as many hills have broad flat ridges projecting from them.

The Sandy and Beaver Canal opened in 1846. It started at the mouth of Little Beaver Creek where it enters the Ohio River, and extended 73 miles through Lisbon to Bolivar where it joined the Ohio-Erie Canal. It was the only privately developed canal in Ohio. Today, the canal towpath

is a prime pathway for the North Country NST to follow. Structural remnants such as lock foundations from the canal days still remain, and provide a visible history of yesteryear.

Much of Columbiana County is drained through Little Beaver Creek and it branches into the Ohio River, while the western portion is drained by Sandy Creek, which flows westward into the Tuscarawas River. Local area parks include Beaver Creek S.P., Guilford Lake S.P., and Scenic Vista County Park.

Carroll County is 389 square miles. The population is approximately 26,530. Carroll County is home to some of the largest tree farms in the state, and it is the #1 producer of Christmas trees in Ohio. The highest point of elevation is 1,380 feet with many rolling hills as part of a rural landscape. The historical Great Trail (also known as the Tuscarawas Trail) traverses the area between Pittsburgh, PA and Chillicothe, OH--near the proposed NCT route. Originally, the Great Trail was established by Native American woodland tribes traveling to take advantage of seasonal hunting opportunities. Later in history, a religious sect walked the trail to indoctrinate the tribes with Christian beliefs, and various military officials and troops traveled on the trail during the Revolutionary War. Today, only a few historical markers mark the location.

The vegetation in both counties is similar to much of the rest of Ohio. The basic forest present in the trail corridor is the combination of the beech-maple and oak-hickory associations--composed of beech, maple, white ash, elm and hickory on poorly drained soils with black, white, and red oaks predominating on better drained shallow soils. In the gorges, hemlock and eastern white pine are found mixed with the dominant beech and maple. In the areas where selective cutting and planting have occurred there is a larger percentage of yellow poplar, white ash, black locust, and black cherry. As more farmland became abandoned at the turn of the century, this idle land began reverting to forest. The main highways near the trail corridor are US 30, SR11, and SR14.

The specific location of the North Country NST Corridor in eastern Ohio is:

Counties: Columbiana and Carroll

Cities and Towns: Negley, Anchor, Fredericktown, Elkton, Jordanville, Lisbon, Hanoverton, Kensington, and Minerva

Townships: Middleton - T7N, R1W Sections 12, 13, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36  
St. Clair - T6N, R1W Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11  
Elkrun - T11N, R2W Sections 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36  
Center - T14N, R3W Sections 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24  
Hanover - T15N, R4W Sections 13, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36  
West - T16N, R5W Sections 32, 33, 34, 35, 36  
Augusta - T15N, R5W Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7  
Brown - T16N, R6W Sections 10, 13, 14, 15

#### **IV. Planning Background in Columbiana and Carroll Counties**

A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FES 75-85 dated October 3, 1975) was prepared by the former Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. This FES titled *The North Country Trail--A Potential Addition to the National Trails System* shows the trail passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties and describes a very general route on page 41 of the FES.

As mentioned in Section I, *The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of The North Country Trail - 1982* also indicates the trail route as passing through Columbiana and Carroll Counties (Attachment 3). In this area of Ohio, the plan identifies the route of the trail as generally following the old Sandy and Beaver Canal's outstanding historic features.

Between 1982 and 1992, little work was done to place the trail on the ground. Beginning in the late 1980's, local members of the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) spent several years seeking landowner permission and building support along the route following the old tow path for the defunct Sandy and Beaver Canal. However, there were areas of uncertainty. Therefore, in 1992 a core planning team, composed of key agencies and trail interest groups, was formed. This team met periodically and focused their efforts on trying to identify feasible alternate routes through Columbiana and Carroll Counties, and/or to validate the old canal as the primary corridor of opportunity. As it turned out, the preferred corridor, with only minor exceptions, is nearly identical to the one identified in the original North Country Trail Feasibility Study and much of it was already the subject of an Environmental Impact Statement process.

#### **V. Implementation of the Planning Process**

In October of 1992, a planning team composed of representatives of the NPS-Madison Trails Office, NPS-Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), NCTA, Buckeye Trail Association (BTA), and Beaver Creek S.P. initiated a comprehensive planning process for the North Country NST in Columbiana and Carroll Counties. The purpose of this process was to determine the ideal location for the trail, and comply with Federal and State environmental laws.

Each planning team member was asked to provide a list of goals and objectives for the North Country Trail in Columbiana and Carroll Counties. The following list was the National Park Service's Goals and Objectives.

The selected route should provide:

- Scenic locations in a nationally significant context.
- Non- motorized experiences such as hiking and walking.

- A long term permanency for the trail by selecting the best route instead of a short term solution on a less desirable route.
- Connections between scenic areas, points of interest, historically significant areas, and/or other trails.
- Periodic hiker amenities such as camping in permissible areas, water sources, and intermittent resupply opportunities.
- Certifiable segments--not on the road.
- Identification of the local managing authority.
- A legally defensible location that meets the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requirements.
- Utilization of public lands and larger tracts of private lands whenever possible to reduce the number of potential conflicts.
- A broad base of community awareness and support for the trail.

The planning team then met to combine the above list with the goals and objectives of the other planning team members. After finding commonality, clarifying, adding, and subtracting, they arrived at a total of 17 combined goals/objectives. The following list was the Planning Team's Goals and Objectives for the North Country NST in East-Central Ohio.

The selected route should:

- A. Have the least impacts on wetlands and endangered resources.
- B. Maintain a regional identity.
- C. Utilize the most scenic lands.
- D. Incorporate natural features and areas.
- E. Utilize public lands and large tracts of private land.
- F. Connect with other trails to be part of a larger trail system.
- G. Connect recreation facilities.
- H. Incorporate hiker facilities, access, and amenities.

- I. Have preference for hiking and walking over other uses.
- J. Be supported by the public.
- K. Achieve long-term permanency with easements, managing authorities, and public lands.
- L. Be sensitive to scenic river designation.
- M. Link recreation and historical sites.
- N. Connect or incorporate communities.
- O. Separate different trail uses.
- P. Incorporate economic considerations.
- Q. Provide for multiple uses.

These compiled goals and objectives then assisted the team as they created a criteria prioritization matrix (Attachment 4). The finalized criteria listed in descending order of importance along with their relative weights was:

- L. Be sensitive to scenic river designation - **120**
- A. Have the least impacts on wetlands and endangered resources - **105**
- K. Achieve long-term permanency with easements, managing authorities, and public lands - **81**
- J. Be supported by the public - **60**
- D. Incorporate natural features and areas - **45**
- F. Connect with other trails to be part of a larger trail system - **36**
- E. Utilize public lands and large tracts of private land - **36**
- C. Utilize the most scenic lands - **35**
- H. Incorporate hiker facilities, access, and amenities - **35**

