



Blackhawk Hills Regional Council



Northwest Illinois Trails Study

A report on the user counts taken, paths observed, maps created, and recommendations for non-motorized land trails in Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties. | May 25, 2018





This project was made possible by funding from the Illinois Department of Transportation.

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Background

Historically, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has allocated (based on population) non-competitive funding to regional planning organizations (RPOs) in rural areas to study transportation-related issues. Prior to this study, IDOT's rural planning program briefly rested in limbo, a consequence of the state's precarious financial situation and prolonged budgeting process. Eventually, in the second half of 2016, IDOT announced funding to support new rural planning projects.

Following the agency's announcement, Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) considered project options, gravitating towards a study of non-motorized land trail use¹ and mapping within the six counties of Northwest Illinois. In coming to this decision, staff noted:

- Economic, recreational, and health benefits of trail use
- The popularity of bicycling (and other forms of trail use)
- Largely non-existent user counts (even along some of the more highly visible, locally known, and presumably well-used trails)
- Interest from local stakeholders in learning more about the region's trails and trail systems

BHRC submitted an application with a budget of \$26,624 (its total per capita allotment). The proposal's scope² included the following deliverables:

- Consolidated and corrected GIS layers
- Website for displaying/downloading GIS layers
- Report on user counts
- Recommendations regarding wayfinding signs, gateways, and maintenance partnerships on selected trails
- Suggested areas of improvement for existing greenways and trails plans and land trails

As a result of the 2017-2018 study, BHRC was able to complete work and collect information in support of the aforementioned deliverables.

¹ To limit the scope of the project. Additionally, we did not consider pedestrian-only trails, like those found in public parks. Further, we note that some of the trails studied are used by snowmobiles during the winter months.

² Our original scope was amended to increase the number of counters deployed and remove a planned survey of trail users on the Jane Addams Trail in Stephenson County.

Methods

Selection

Before starting the project, BHRC worked with the region’s trail stakeholders to select ideal trails for study and determine optimal counter placements. Some of the trails selected were, relatively speaking, isolated; others connected uninterruptedly to larger systems; most were in some way thought to be part of a northern Illinois loop (i.e., from Chicago to the Mississippi River) known as the Grand Illinois Trail, as conceived of and planned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Equipment

After researching devices from Chambers Electronics, Eco-Counter, and TRAFx, BHRC opted to install the TRAFx Infrared Trail Counter product for reasons of portability, ease of deployment in the field, and cost. Other equipment purchases included a Bad Elf GNSS Surveyor and Microsoft Surface for fieldwork and data collection, as well as the less refined tools like a post pounder and vegetation saw.

Installation & Setup

As part of a fairly laborious process, BHRC installed the counters into modified Eaton air conditioning disconnect boxes (as recommended by TRAFx). The boxes provided relatively secure and somewhat weatherized housing. A few of the disconnect boxes were spray painted to provide environment-specific camouflage. Nineteen (19) devices were deployed – fourteen (14) by BHRC (no ownership labels), three (3) by Trails for Illinois (marked with Trails for Illinois ownership labels), and two (2) by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (markings unknown). We set out with equipment as soon as it was available or weather permitted (consequently, some sites have more hours with data than others). The first batch of BHRC-owned counters were deployed during the



A counter in housing in the field in Galena.

spring of 2017. BHRC acquired additional counters in fall 2017, and some of those late acquisitions were deployed. The others were kept in reserve (in case of theft, vandalism, or equipment failure).

BHRC positioned most of its counters with the scope at waist height³ above a trail's surface. Deployment teams made sure to account for the height difference between the surface of a trail and its sloping shoulders and banks. They were also careful to position the devices to cover the width of the trail without also counting heated background vegetation that could be blown about by the wind and recorded. Most were attached to existing wood posts (using wood screws) or U-channel posts (using bolts, nuts, and washers) pounded in place. One was mounted to a tree. The counters were masked, hidden in plain site or, in a few cases, not hidden at all. Over the course of the study, two counters placed by Trails for Illinois were lost (presumably stolen), one BHRC counter was lost (presumably stolen), and we know of two counters that were vandalized. One counter was removed from service due to erratic counts.



Reviewing a site for deployment.

³ Generally adult waist height; sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on deployment location constraints.



A counter in housing in the field in Galena.

Counting

The TRAFx Infrared Trail Counter works by sensing variations in infrared radiation (IR), recording a count whenever it sees a significant change from the ambient amount of IR. All counts recorded were assigned to a particular hour. For example, any counts recorded between 1 and 2 pm (e.g., a count at 1:27 pm and a count at 1:32 pm) were assigned to 1300 hours. In future phases of this project, we hope to verify counter records with human eyes waiting near deployed counters or with multiple counters at a single location.

Limitations

The devices, though economical and mostly reliable, were incapable of differentiating by mode (e.g., between walkers or bicyclists), direction, or heat signature (e.g., human or animal). Tightly grouped persons or bicycles were likely undercounted. They also lacked cellular, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth functionality, meaning that staff needed to open physically the housing to download .txt files containing counts. Furthermore, the counters do not automatically adjust for the start or end of Daylight Saving Time, and we elected not to make manual adjustments in the field. Anyone using BHRC's raw data in the future will need to account for this choice if they wish to analyze hourly trends during Standard Time between November and March. This choice is not likely to affect analysis at the daily, monthly, or yearly level.

Other Considerations

Deployment considerations include a host of miscellaneous issues – including determining trail ownership, obtaining permission from owners to deploy the counters, and considering JULIE (locate-before-digging) calls for particular locations – notably, when pipelines, power lines, and other infrastructure might be impacted by post-pounding. Despite the remote location of many of these trails, there is still a substantial amount of human built infrastructure underneath or running adjacent.

Counts

Here is described the deployment of counters by trail and explain how factors besides trail use may have influenced counts. BHRC does not yet understand the region's trails well enough to determine whether the people using them are one-way or forth-and-back users.⁴ We were also unable to confirm definitively the most typical starting point for users along each trail studied. Some trails, like a portion of the Galena River Trail, have something describable as a single starting point near a parking lot or well-established trailhead. These sites present a distinct point of entry and represent (arguably) Mile 0 for many users. However, there are multiple points of entry even along the Galena River Trail, making it difficult for us to draw conclusions about starts even along this path.

Table: Deployment by Trail and Counts by Site⁵

Galena River Trail (GaRT)	Great River Trail (GrRT)	Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (HFCT)	Jane Addams Trail (JAT)	Joe Stengel Trail (JST)	Lowell Parkway Trail (LPT)	Sterling Multi-Activity Recreational Trail (SMART)
<p>Nearby Communities: Galena, Jo Daviess County Total Counters = 4 (4 BHRC counters) Lost or Stolen = 0</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, hunting, recreation</p> <p>Notes: Hunting-related closures may have diminished use near some GaRT sites. The Tunnel counter may have captured some non-trail users looking to recycle items or dispose of trash.</p> <p>Events⁶ (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean⁷ x24 x365): *5,995, Riplinger (7,926 data hrs, 5/3/17 start date, 8,490 raw⁸) *17,106, Tunnel (7,925 data hrs, 5/3/17 start date, 22,351 raw) *27,342, Muchow (7,924 data hrs, 5/3/17 start date, 39,800 raw) *23,231, Meeker (7,927 data hrs, 5/3/17 start date, 35,374 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Savanna, Thomson, Fulton, Carroll County, Whiteside County Total Counters = 3 (1 BHRC counter, 2 FWS counters) Lost or Stolen = 1</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation</p> <p>Notes: None.</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *11,454, Savanna (5,491 data hrs, 5/5/17 start date, 11,481 raw) *6,314, Martens⁸ (4,518 data hrs, 5/23/17 start date, 5,908 raw) *13,201, Sandprairie (4,515 data hrs, 5/23/17 start date, 10,198 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Rock Falls, Tampico, Whiteside County, Bureau County Total Counters = 3 (3 deployed by Trails for Illinois) Lost or Stolen = 2</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation</p> <p>Notes: The IL-40 counter was attached to a bridge structure, providing optimal placement (hiding and funneling).</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *7,481, IL40 (6,788 data hrs, 6/6/17 start date, 8,353 raw) *1,893, Tampico (1,383 data hrs, 5/2/17 start date, 560 raw) *454, Lazyt (771 data hrs, 7/25/17 start date, 165 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Orangeville, Freeport, Stephenson County Total Counters = 4 (4 BHRC counters) Lost or Stolen = 0</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation, shopping, work</p> <p>Notes: Summer flooding may have diminished use across the board. The counter in Orangeville and the counter near the Wisconsin border were attached to bridge structures, providing optimal placement (hiding and funneling). The counter located at Tutty's Crossing probably failed to capture some trail users because of multiple opportunities for trail entry/exit at the trailhead.</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *1,738, Wisco (8,752 data hrs, 4/28/17 start date, 4,050 raw) *3,034, Orange (8,753 data hrs, 4/28/17 start date, 5,359 raw) *4,449, Block (8,753 data hrs, 4/28/17 start date, 7,231 raw) *10,128, Tutty's (8,752 data hrs, 4/28/17 start date, 21,864 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Polo, Dixon, Ogle County, Lee County Total Counters = 1 (1 BHRC counter) Lost or Stolen = 0</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation</p> <p>Notes: Late deployment likely impacted the count at the JST site. The counter was also inactive for a period of time as a result of a prematurely terminated data download. The counter near Sterling Road was attached to a gate structure, providing optimal placement (hiding and funneling).</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *365, Sterling (2,400 data hrs, 10/26/17 start date, 364 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Dixon, Lee County Total Counters = 2 (2 BHRC counters) Lost or Stolen = 0 Vandalized = 2 (both repaired)</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation</p> <p>Notes: Late deployments and vandalism likely impacted counts at both LPT sites. To address the latter issue, staff made repairs in the field. The counters were also inactive for a period of time as a result of a prematurely terminated data download.</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *18,886, Sgate (2,444 data hrs, 10/26/17 start date, 7,012 raw) *3,791, Meadows (2,453 data hrs, 10/26/17 start date, 1,871 raw)</p>	<p>Nearby Communities: Sterling, Whiteside County Total Counters = 2 (2 BHRC counters) Lost or Stolen = 0 Malfunctioning = 1 (removed)</p> <p>Uses (observed or assumed): exercise, recreation</p> <p>Notes: Late deployments likely impacted counts at both SMART sites; during its deployment, the Dillon Home counter became erratic and was removed from the field.</p> <p>Events (10% Trimmed Hourly Mean x24 x365): *24,394, Dillon (1,088 data hrs, 10/2/17 start date, 3,752 raw) *17,847, Sinni (5,303 data hrs, 10/2/17 start date, 14,844 raw)</p>

⁴ To some extent, this may not matter, as use is use; when determining economic impacts, however, knowing unique users may be more useful.

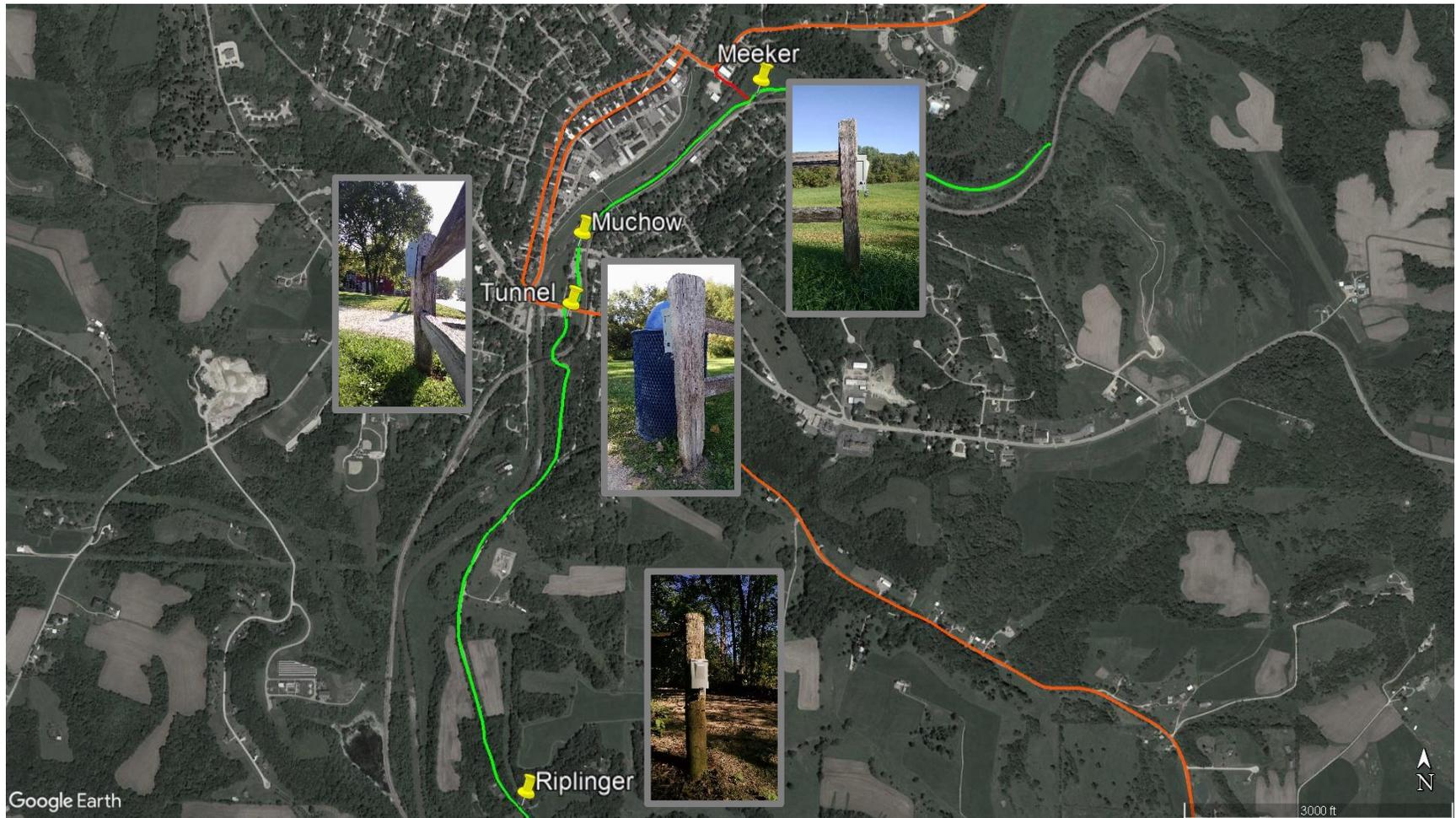
⁵ Where possible, we will continue to update records for sites with less than one calendar year worth of data in order to determine a more accurate estimate of total events.

⁶ An event means something occurred for the counter to record a count. In short, something was counted.

⁷ 10% trimmed hourly mean omits the top 5% and bottom 5% of hourly events.

⁸ Raw = raw total of events counted

Counter Sites – Galena River Trail



Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

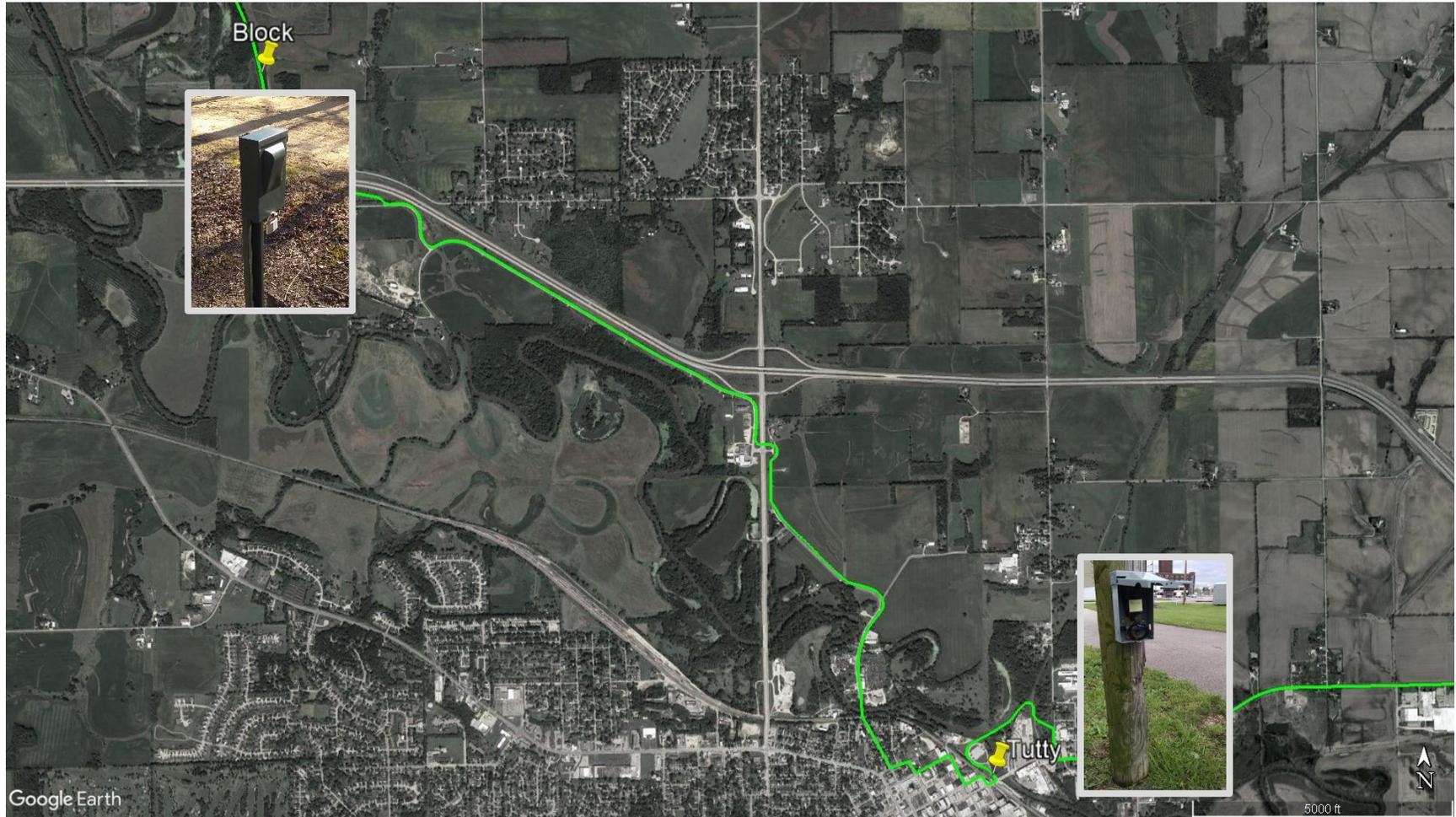
Counter Sites – Jane Addams Trail (north)



Google Earth

Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

Counter Sites – Jane Addams Trail (south)



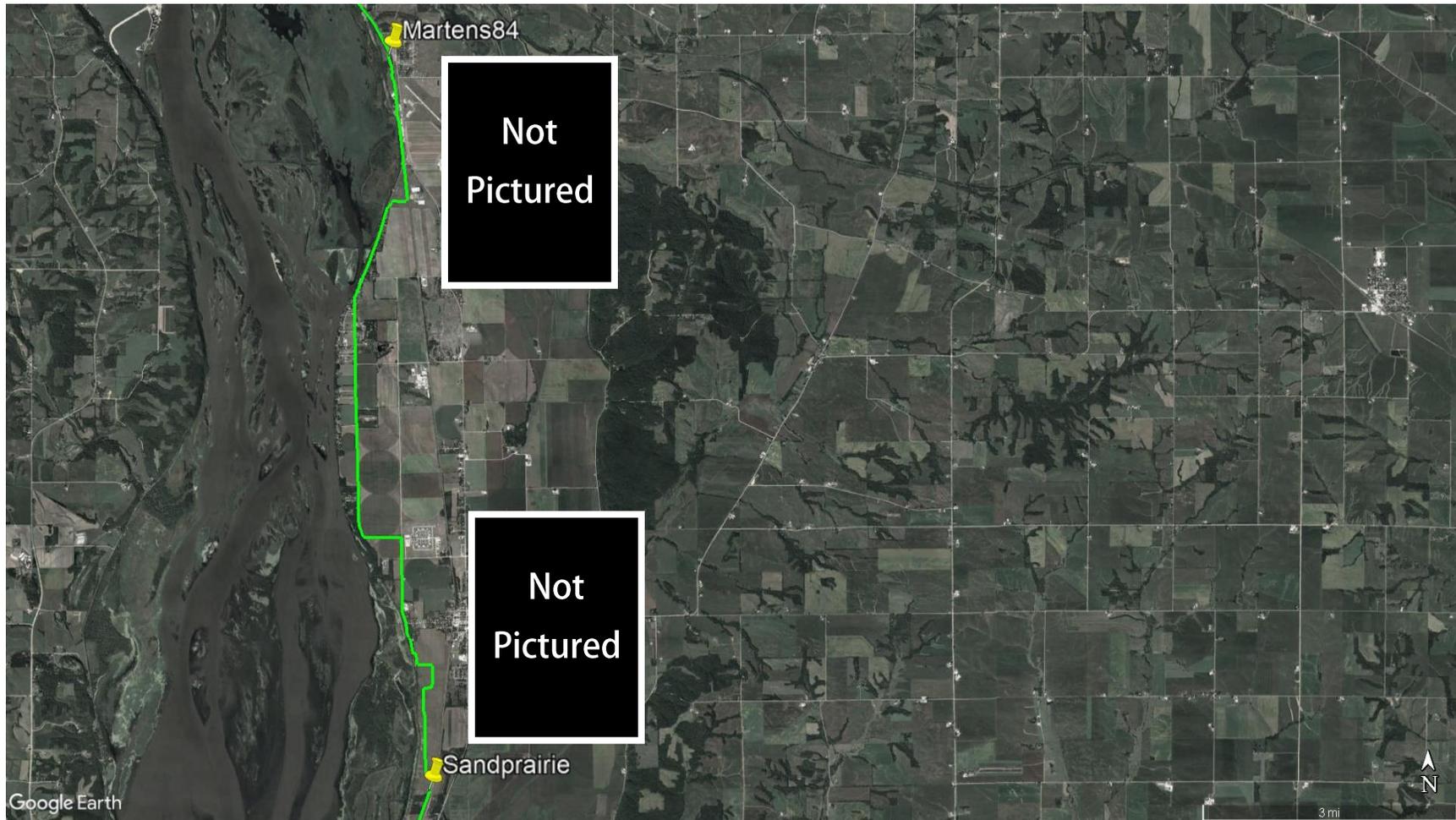
Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

Counter Sites – Great River Trail (north)



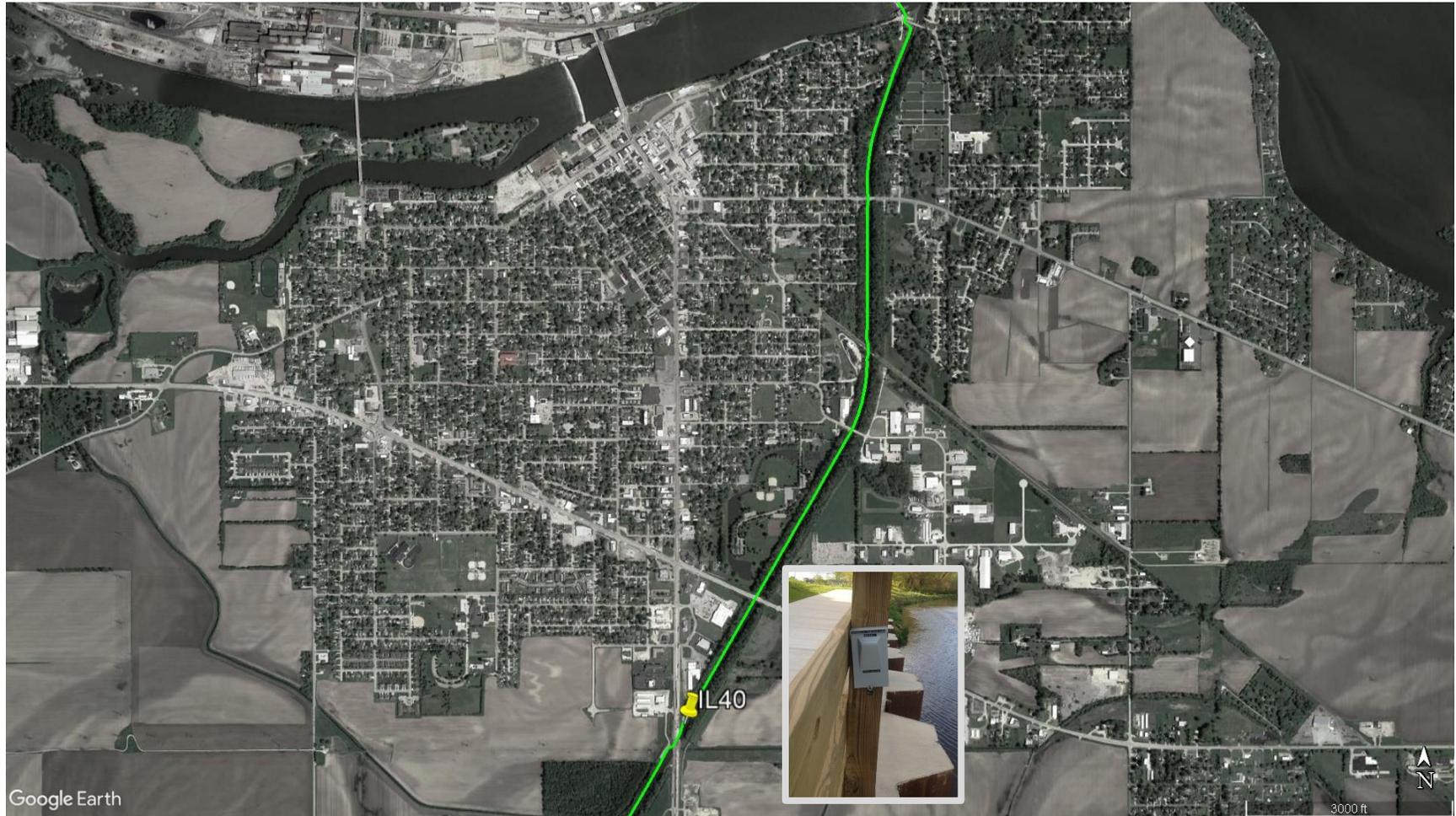
Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

Counter Sites – Great River Trail (south)



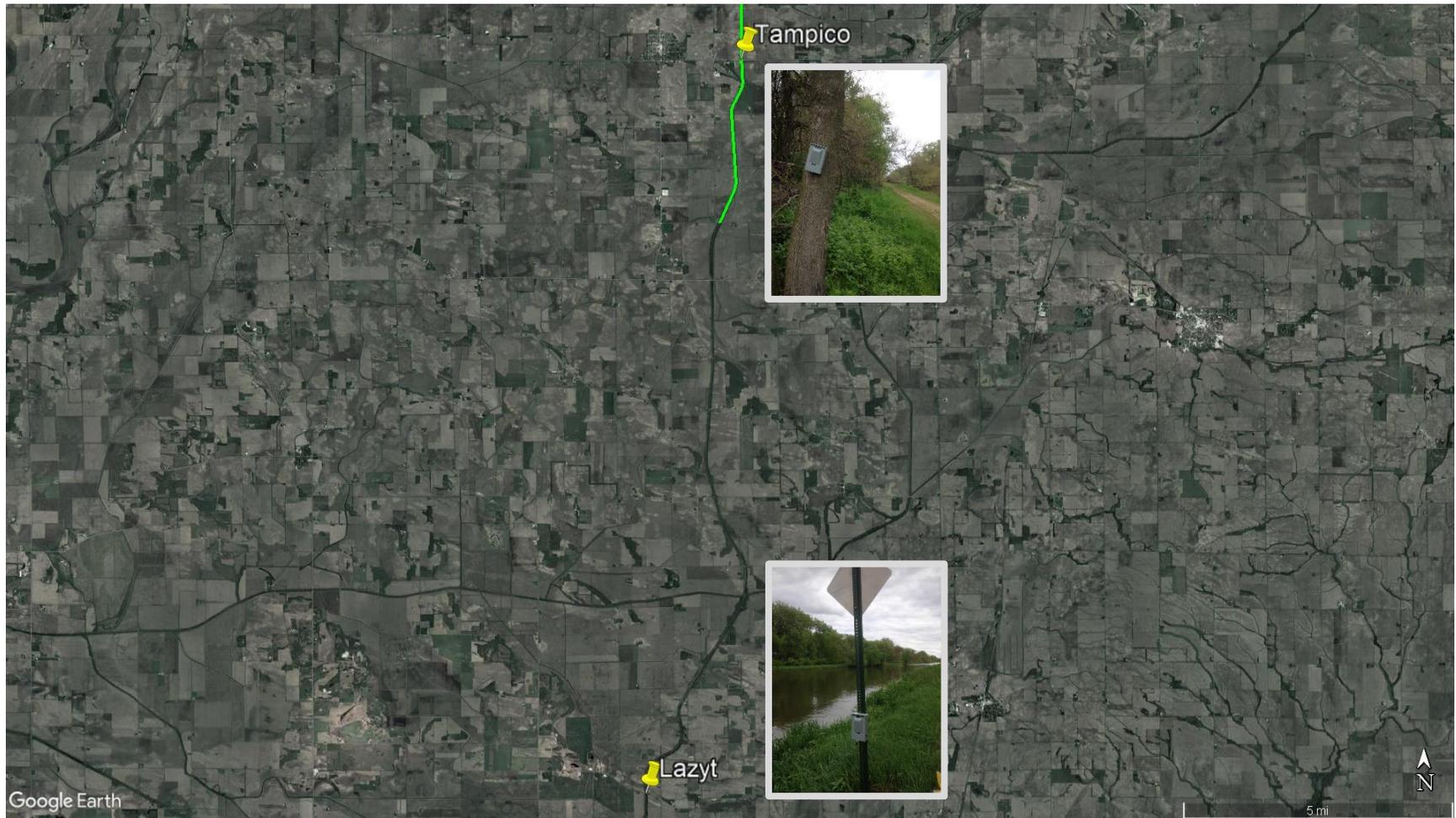
Each yellow pin represents a counter site. These counters were deployed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Counter Sites – Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (north)



Each yellow pin represents a counter site. This counter was deployed by Trails for Illinois.

Counter Sites – Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (north)



Each yellow pin represents a counter site. These counters were deployed by Trails for Illinois.

Counter Sites – Sterling Multi-Activity Recreational Trail



Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

Counter Sites – Joe Stengel & Lowell Parkway Trails (Dixon & Polo)



Each yellow pin represents a counter site.

Trail Layer Consolidation

During the Trails Study, BHRC staff collected digital and paper trail products illustrating or describing the trails within Northwest Illinois (Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, and Whiteside counties). Between six counties and various levels of government, the region has more maps than one might first presume. When a person includes state agencies and other sources of data, the cache of mapping products is not insignificant. Data origination sources (or sources we presume to have data) are listed as follows:

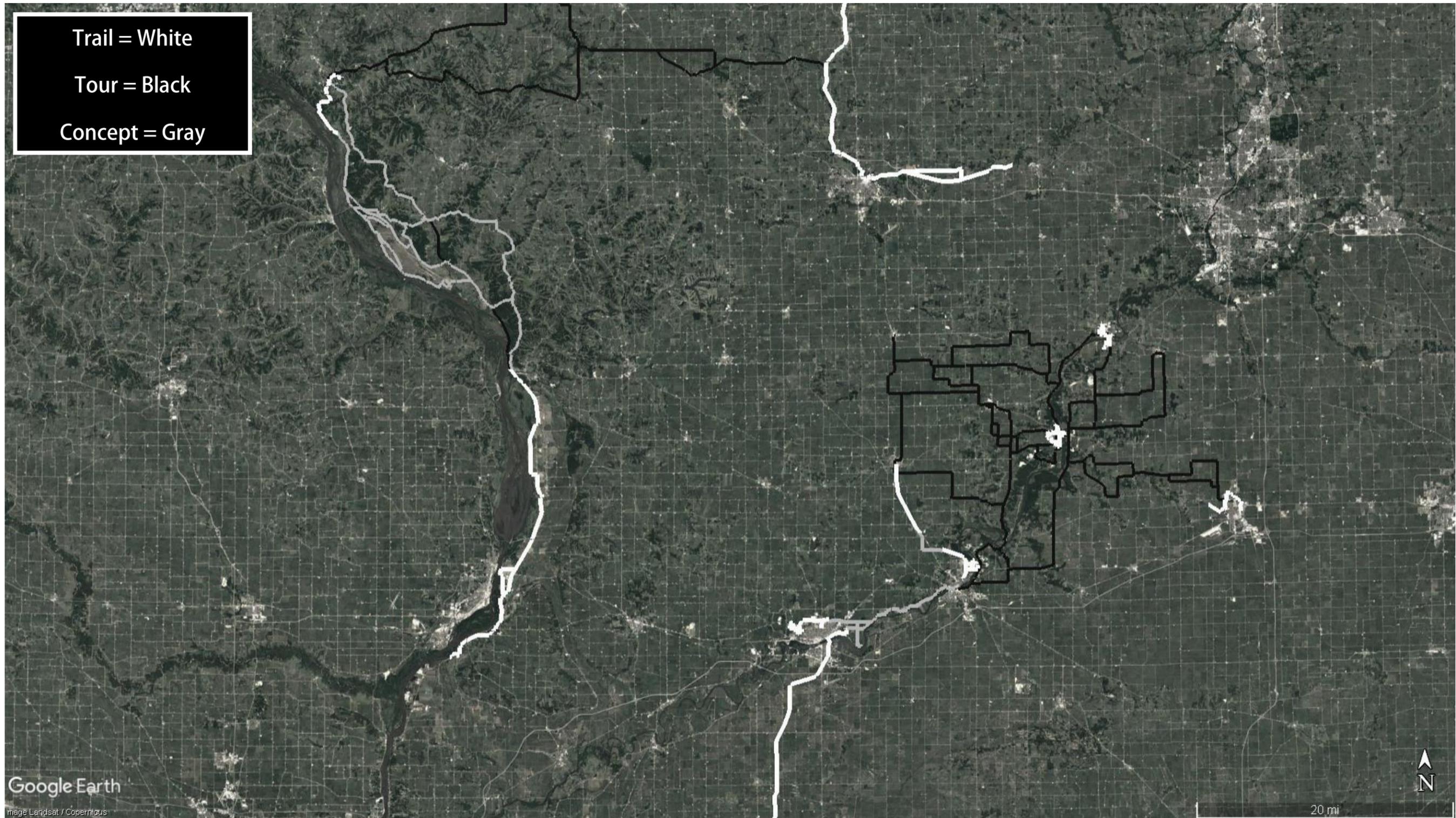
- BHRC
- bikemap.net
- bikeogle.org
- ~~City of Dixon~~ (solicited, not received)
- ~~City of Freeport~~ (solicited, not received)
- City of Galena
- ~~City of Morrison~~ (solicited, not received)
- City of Oregon
- City of Rochelle
- County-level greenways and trails plans
- IDNR Grand Illinois Trail Cue Sheets
- Dixon Park District
- Flagg-Rochelle Park District
- Freeport Park District
- IDOT BLOS
- Jane Addams Trail Commission
- pecatonicaprairietrail.com
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
- Rock Falls Tourism
- Sterling Park District

To find the layers, we simply solicited trail maps from municipalities and other sources as we learned about them or suspected their existence. Although not all entities responded or were able to locate data, coverage of the region was comprehensive, in that it included portions of all six counties. In some cases, we were able to obtain maps from independent sources, including online and from products already in BHRC's possession.

The consolidated product produced by BHRC includes both trails in use and those imagined by state and locals. We also added what we refer to as "tours," which are trails that almost entirely use roadways. These so-called tours are found predominantly in Ogle County, where at bikeogle.org bicyclists are presented with a slate of options for scenic bicycle rides across the countryside (all originating at the historic Oregon train depot). Furthermore, BHRC recorded certain layers using a Bad Elf GNSS Surveyor, a GPS receiver capable of logging point (e.g. amenities) and line (e.g. the trails themselves) data.

Following the trails study, BHRC will work to upload applicable GIS layers to Google Maps (and other services) so that they can be accessed independently from our own web infrastructure by people using (or planning to use) the region's various trails.

The following map illustrates the consolidation of the region's trail and tour layers. The map includes both many of the real and some conceptual trails/tours.



Amenities & Issues

BHRC (with the help of Trails for Illinois and a hybrid electric bicycle) recorded the location of amenities along four of the region's trails: the Galena River Trail, the Great River Trail (between Savanna and Fulton), the Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail (between Rock Falls and I-80), and the Jane Addams Trail (between Freeport and the Wisconsin state line). For a complete list of the individual amenities recorded and placed geographically, please see the Trails Study website at www.nwiltrails.org.

Before starting fieldwork for this portion of the Trails Study, BHRC created a list of amenity types within Collector for ArcGIS. In the field, the observer (and trail user) assigned a type to each amenity recorded. The observer also noted issues related to user experience. In the following table, *intersections* refers to intersections of trails and roadways. *Conditions* refers to a point of significant damage (such as erosion).

Types of Amenities

- Bench
- Bike Rack
- Bridge
- Drinking Water
- Garbage Can
- Multi-Tool
- Other
- Parking
- Picnic Table
- Point of Interest
- Scenic Point
- Side Trail
- Sign
- Toilet
- Trailhead

Other

- Food and Drink
- Intersection
- Conditions

Major Findings

This section recounts major findings from the Amenities and Conditions portion of the Trails Study, beginning with illustrations of typical issues.





The three Ds = Description, Distance, and Direction.

Table: Major Findings and Descriptions

Finding	Description
<p>With the exception of the Jane Addams Trails, signage is poor or non-existent across many of the region’s trails.</p>	<p>This finding pertains to at least three types of signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayfinding: wayfinding signs, quite literally, help the trail user find his or her way when using a trail. They also point trail users towards key businesses, like bars, restaurants, and bicycle shops. • Confidence: confidence signs help assure people that the trail they started on is, in fact, the same trail that they are on now. These usually consist of a trail name and arrow point the way. • Interpretive: interpretive signs attempt to interpret (or describe) a particular point of interest and add to the user’s knowledge or understanding of a place or area. Interpretive signs often include references to history and culture. <p>Most of the trails inventoried do not provide sufficient wayfinding and confidence signage. There are also few signs that highlight off-trail destinations, including businesses. Although the Jane Addams Trail is mentioned as a well-signed trail, even portions of the trail are not ideally signed, notably the segment within the City of Freeport (generic signage instead of specific wayfinding or Jane Addams Trail confidence signs).</p>
<p>Navigating the trails as a first time user or visitor to Northwest Illinois is difficult.</p>	<p>As noted above, signage is poor. Some trails are not available on Google Maps, and paper maps may not be readily available. Users new to the region or the trail must guess themselves along, especially along the Great River Trail between Savanna and Thomson.</p>
<p>First time users find it difficult to locate trailheads and parking lots.</p>	<p>It is not always clear from maps and roadways where trailheads are located. This may discourage users or add to frustration during the search process. While there is parking available at most trailheads, it is not explicit that a trail user may park a vehicle in a particular location for, say, the length of a weekend. In some cases, it is unclear where one can park (most notably at the Great River Trail trailhead in Savanna, which features an uninviting, disjointed trailhead and chain-link funnel).</p>
<p>Portions of trails are eroding, especially along the Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail.</p>	<p>Impassibility may become an issue as trail segments continue to deteriorate. Washouts appear to impact crushed limestone paths the most, creating potholes and larger obstacles to passage (note: the Galena River Trail and Jane Addams Trails appear to do a good job of addressing washout issues as they happen). Paved paths are impacted by sedimentation (caused by washouts elsewhere or flooding).</p>

<p>There appear to be no destinations for trail users.</p>	<p>Because signage does not contain information about what one might term “cool places to visit/eat/drink,” the trails do not do a good job of funneling people to points of interest and into communities. Communities (and the businesses within them) also appear to do little to encourage bicyclists to use local establishments.</p> <p>That said, one does see community/business signage catering to tourists near Thomson on the Great River Trail. In addition, some locals do use trails for destination-related tasks, including grocery shopping (observed on the Jane Addams Trail).</p>
<p>Vegetation along the trails encroaches on paths.</p>	<p>Overgrown trees and shrubs create unkempt appearances and safety hazards. Moreover, spreading plants – like poison ivy – could cause havoc for the botanically uninitiated and curious.</p>
<p>Northwest Illinois’ trails are attractive, but sometimes lacking (they are either incomplete or too short).</p>	<p>The Jane Addams received top marks from our observer. However, one of the major criticisms of the other trails were that they are still patchwork in nature (the Great River Trail) or too short to justify a trip to the region (the Galena River Trail). The Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail, while unified and distinct, was observed to be somewhat repetitive and distant from amenities (and, consequently, less attractive/interesting).</p>
<p>Automobile barriers could create hazards for bicyclists.</p>	<p>Some of the barriers used to keep vehicles off of the trails may actually harm bicyclists who do not see them or are unable to maneuver easily around them.</p>
<p>The trails are under-promoted and under-branded.</p>	<p>This includes promotion on the region’s roadways, where signs directing users to trailheads are sparse. Branding across the board is inconsistent, not compelling, or not existent. And there is no central website for the region as a whole (unlike Bi-State Regional Commission’s QCTrails.com).</p> <p>Trails are occasionally highlighted during and used for special events, such as the Hennepin Hundred Ultramarathon in 2017.</p>
<p>Greenways and trails plans are beginning to show their ages.</p>	<p>In the past, this type of planning was driven by grant availability. Documents for each of the BHRC counties were published in the following years: Carroll – 2007, Jo Daviess – 2008, Lee – 2002, Ogle – 2003, Stephenson – 2001, and Whiteside – 1999/2008.</p> <p>While county plans have driven past projects in Northwest Illinois, they now have less functional usefulness.</p>

Recommendations

We have compiled a list of project and planning recommendations.

Table: Trail Recommendations

Recommendation	Description
<p>Develop a style guide and add or replace signage, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wayfinding • Confidence • Interpretive 	<p>An investment in wayfinding and confidence signage represents the lowest of the hanging fruit when it comes to easy-to-make, biggest bang-for-the-buck investments. New signs should reference a regional style guide, which includes information about deployment best practices, aesthetics, and maximum impact on users. The style guide should also support consistent branding across the region.</p> <p>When considering specific signs, a regional map should be on the list. Deploying regional maps should help trail users understand that there is a larger network in Northwest Illinois to enjoy.</p>
<p>Remove or replace obstructions that make passage difficult, including barriers meant to prevent motorized entry.</p>	<p>In general, local (or state/federal) stakeholders should work to remove vegetation and artificial barriers that are or could become safety issues. Implementation will be different for each site. In the case of the former (vegetation), it may be cost effective to solicit volunteers (and those with tools, such as chainsaws) for annual trail-cleanup workdays. Localities should also consider obtaining the help of AmeriCorps teams.</p>
<p>Form a regional trails partnership that meets bi-annually to discuss the trails and promotional projects.</p>	<p>The group's scope could include developing uniform or consistent branding, building maintenance/volunteer partnerships, pinpointing further study areas, determining ways to protect existing trails from damage and loss due to underinvestment, and identifying ideal sites and corridors for acquisition.</p>
<p>Partner with local stakeholders to apply for grants that address trail maintenance and capital infrastructure issues.</p>	<p>We believe BHRC can support local governments and even the states in leading efforts to seek and secure funding for ongoing maintenance.</p>

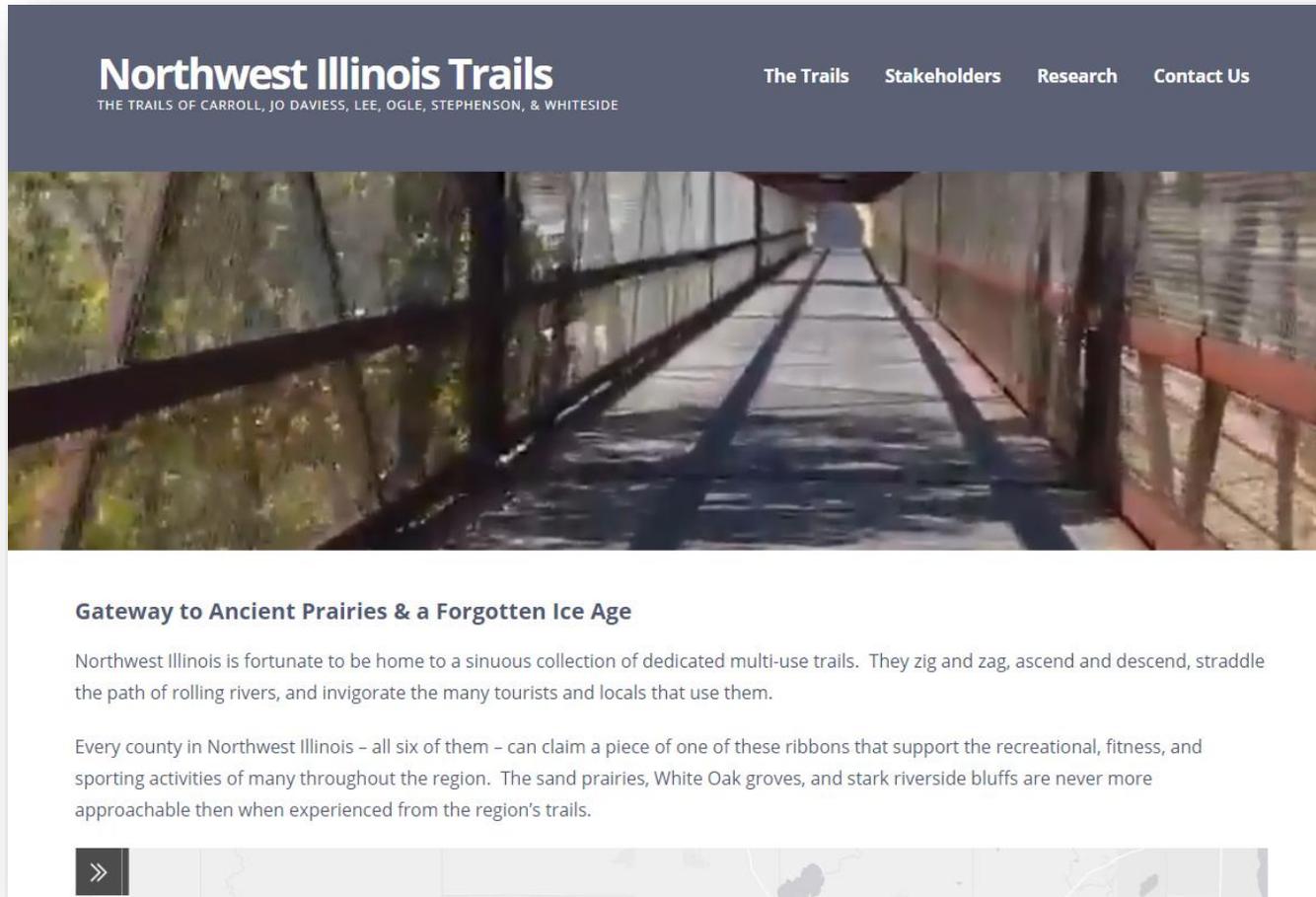
Determine distinct trail segments, count mileage for each distinct segment, and assign mileage markers at pre-determined intervals.	This should help with trail user confidence and provide public safety/emergency response a reference point.
Add local emergency contact information to signage; in selected areas, add so-called blue-light phones.	This may be especially useful for non-locals using the region's various trails. Regarding blue-light phones: this would be easiest in urban locations, but some solutions may be appropriate in rural areas near preserves and state/federal establishments (and take advantage of solar power).
Improve aesthetics and amenities at trailheads and gateways.	This may include arches, landscaping, signage, lighting, information booths, and other improvements. Here, we define gateways as transition areas (say, between the IDNR sand prairie preserve and woodland sections).
Shore-up erosion prone areas.	Most notably along the Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail.
Work with local businesses to create destinations for trail users.	Tourism agencies, chambers, and localities should work with businesses that will benefit from continued or expanded trail use. Businesses near trails should be encouraged to provide minor amenities to bicyclists (such as bicycle racks) and consider how users access their properties for drinking, dining, shopping, etc.
Identify liability concerns that dissuade individuals, organizations, or governments from making investments in trail infrastructure.	Some governmental entities have liability concerns. Resources, such as those published by Ride Illinois (http://rideillinois.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/BoubDisincentiveRiskExposure.pdf), should be used to dispel misconceptions and address other issues.
Continue counting trail users and determine economic impacts.	This may include upgrading counting equipment, making manual counts, and interviewing trail users.

Table: Planning Recommendations

Recommendation	Description
Update greenways and trails maps and consolidate individual plans into a regional document for Northwest Illinois.	An updated regional plan should provide an easier go at future grant writing and unified branding. The plan should also point out ways to better accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians along highways, bridges, and transportation systems in general.
Form regional trails partnership that meets bi-annually.	Please see the Trail Recommendations table.

Northwest Illinois Trails Website

Built using Word Press and hosted with GoDaddy, Northwest Illinois Trails (www.nwiltrails.org) is live. We expect to update the site over time, as well as use it to promote the region's trails.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Northwest Illinois Trails website. The header is dark blue with the title "Northwest Illinois Trails" in white, followed by the subtitle "THE TRAILS OF CARROLL, JO DAVIESS, LEE, OGLE, STEPHENSON, & WHITESIDE". Navigation links for "The Trails", "Stakeholders", "Research", and "Contact Us" are also present. The main content area features a large photograph of a paved trail with wooden railings, leading through a wooded area. Below the photo is a section titled "Gateway to Ancient Prairies & a Forgotten Ice Age" with two paragraphs of text. At the bottom, there is a navigation bar with a double arrow icon and a map of the region.

Northwest Illinois Trails

THE TRAILS OF CARROLL, JO DAVIESS, LEE, OGLE, STEPHENSON, & WHITESIDE

[The Trails](#) [Stakeholders](#) [Research](#) [Contact Us](#)

Gateway to Ancient Prairies & a Forgotten Ice Age

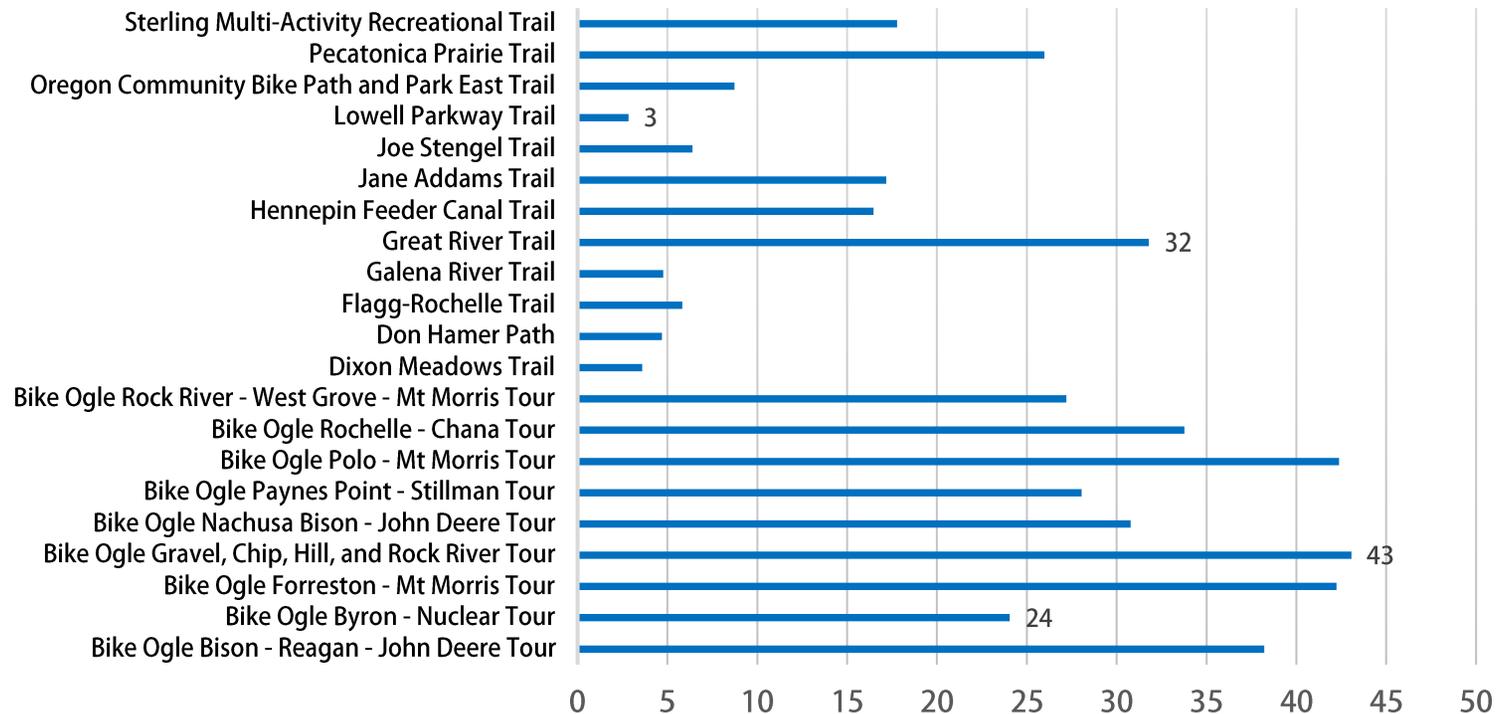
Northwest Illinois is fortunate to be home to a sinuous collection of dedicated multi-use trails. They zig and zag, ascend and descend, straddle the path of rolling rivers, and invigorate the many tourists and locals that use them.

Every county in Northwest Illinois - all six of them - can claim a piece of one of these ribbons that support the recreational, fitness, and sporting activities of many throughout the region. The sand prairies, White Oak groves, and stark riverside bluffs are never more approachable than when experienced from the region's trails.

Land Ownership & Mileage

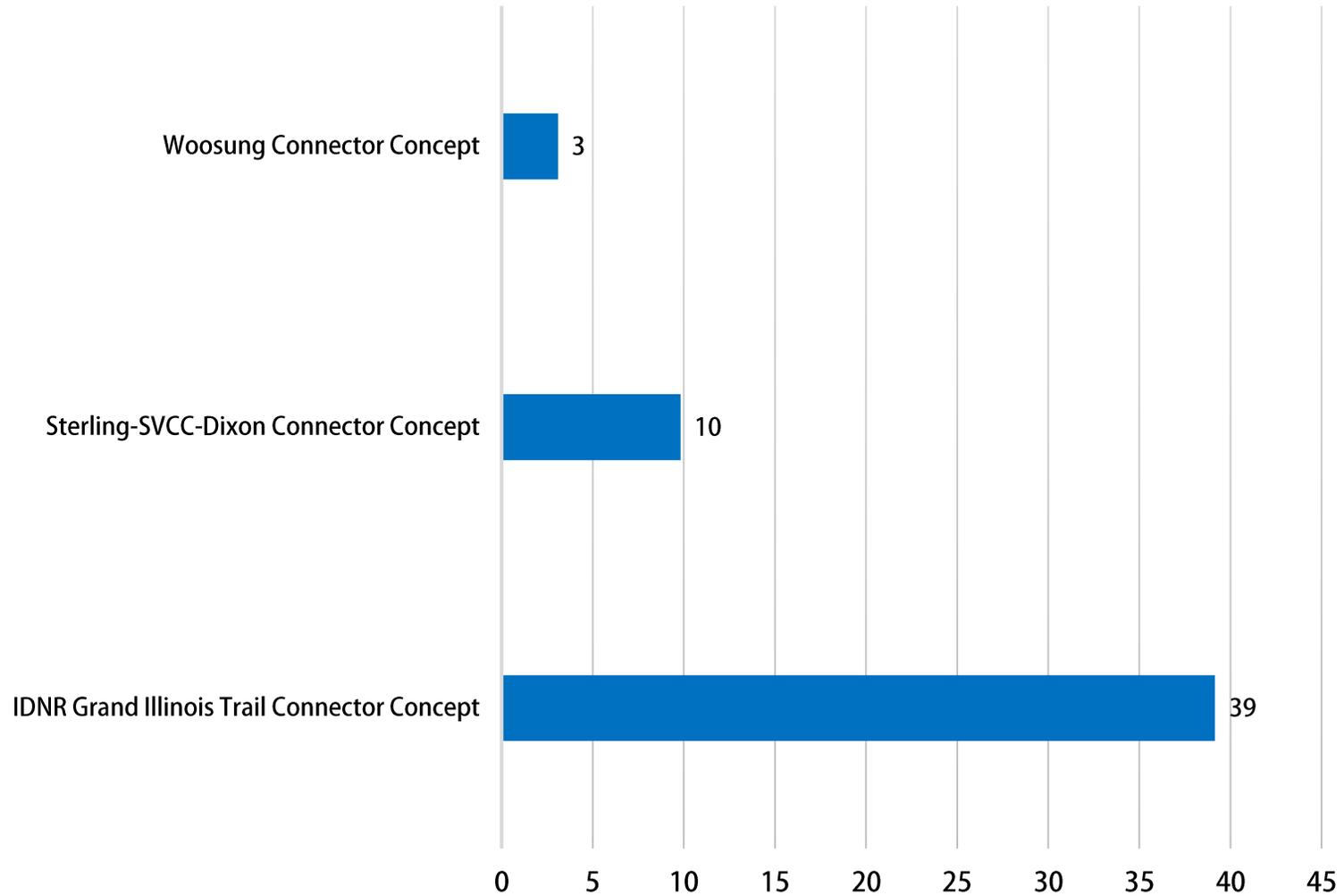
The following charts illustrate land ownership and mileage across the region's trails and tours. We define tours as paths that are predominantly on roadways. Some trails do occupy public roadways and are technically incomplete (exemplified by portions of the Great River Trail between Savanna and Thomson). We expect these figures to change over time as mapping becomes more precise, existing trails are modified, and new trails are established.

TRAILS & TOURS - MILEAGE BY PATH



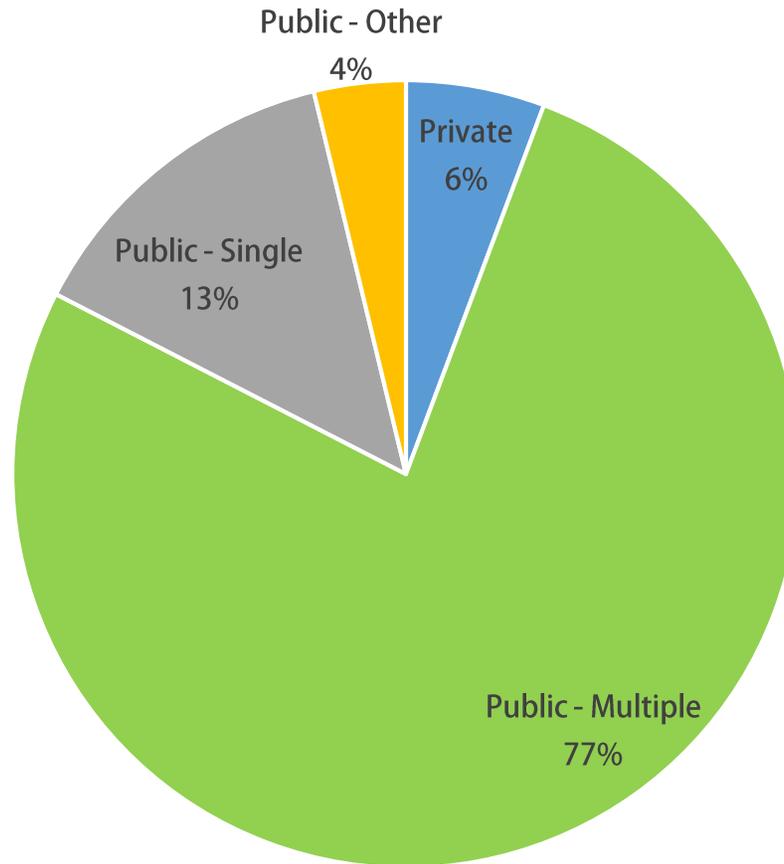
Numbers in miles. Analysis by BHRC GIS. From multiple sources.

CONCEPTS - Mileage by Path



Numbers in miles. Analysis by BHRC GIS. From multiple sources.

TRAILS & TOURS - MILEAGE BY OWNERSHIP



■ Private ■ Public - Multiple ■ Public - Single ■ Public - Other

Analysis by BHRC GIS. From multiple sources.

Grant Sources

Programs exist at the state/federal and institutional level that provide significant sources of funding for trail planning and implementation projects.

Table: Related Funding Organizations

Funding Organizations	Description of Opportunity
Recreational Trails Program https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/aeg/pages/federalrecreationaltrailsprogram.aspx	The federal "Recreational Trails Program" (RTP), was created through the National Recreational Trail Fund Act (NRTFA) as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and re-authorized by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This program provides funding assistance for acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of both motorized and non-motorized recreation trails.
Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/funding-opportunities/ITEP	The ITEP provides funding for community based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure.
People for Bikes https://peopleforbikes.org/our-work/community-grants	The PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program provides funding for important and influential projects that leverage federal funding and build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S.
Union Pacific (UP communities only) https://www.up.com/aboutup/community/foundation/grant-program/index.htm	The Local Grants part of the UP Foundation's Community Ties Giving Program provides grants that develop community spaces and addresses local needs, including projects that preserve and share the unique history of the local community, including projects related to train and/or Union Pacific history.

<p>Wal-Mart Foundation http://giving.walmart.com/walmart-foundation/community-grant-program</p>	<p>The Community Grant program provides grants to local organizations.</p>
<p>American Hiking Society https://americanhiking.org/national-trails-fund</p>	<p>The National Trails Fund is reserved for organizations in the Hiking Alliance that are also 501(c)(3) certified nonprofits. Members that lack that accreditation do have the opportunity to use a fiscal agent. It is the only privately funded national grants program that gives solely to the building and protecting of hiking trails.</p>
<p>Kodak http://rlch.org/funding/kodak-american-greenways-grants</p>	<p>The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program is a partnership project of the Eastman Kodak Company, National Geographic and the Conservation Fund that gives a series of small grants (\$500 to \$2500) for the planning, design and implementation of greenways. Public agencies may apply, but nonprofits are given preference.</p>
<p>Conservation Alliance http://www.conservationalliance.com/funding-criteria</p>	<p>Conservation Alliance has given over \$12 million in grants to protect and preserve wild areas across North America, both for their habitat and for recreational purposes. These grants are for registered 501(c)(3) organizations that meet their criteria. While these funds are often for protecting land, they have been used for providing pedestrian access to wild lands, which includes trail development.</p>
<p>Exelon Foundation http://www.exelonfoundation.org/focus.htm</p>	<p>The Foundation's mission is to encourage respect for the environment and strengthen the social and economic fabric of the community by supporting programs in the following three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment and Conservation programs that build awareness for environmental stewardship and energy efficiency; partnerships focused on preservation and conservation of open lands, wildlife habitats, wetlands, parks, trail systems or recreational areas.

<p>Kubota Tractor Corporation https://www.kubotausa.com/kubota-cares</p>	<p>Kubota Cares, the Kubota Tractor Corporation philanthropy program, supports nonprofit organizations that enhance the quality of life in rural communities throughout the United States. Emphasis is given to organizations that focus on people who work with and shape the earth in ways that help their communities thrive, such as pathways, playgrounds, and parks, and local agricultural initiatives. Eligible organizations must have been in existence for at least one year. Support is provided through cash grants and equipment donations.</p>
<p>Quadratec https://www.quadratec.com/page/quadratec-cares-grant-program</p>	<p>The Quadratec Cares 'Energize The Environment' Grant Program supports nonprofit organizations, community groups, and individuals throughout the country who are pursuing a program designed to benefit the environment.</p> <p>Some examples of eligible programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail building or restoration projects; • Park beautification events; • Litter prevention initiatives; • Earth study missions; • Sustainable land management activities; • Community environmental educational projects; and, • Youth educational engagement events. <p>For each funding cycle, one organization will receive a \$3,500 grant to be used exclusively towards stated project.</p>

Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
<https://www.cfnil.org/grants/neighborhood>

The Neighborhood Grants Program exists to:

- Encourage and support the work of neighborhood-based groups and organizations trying to preserve and/or improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods;
- Promote resident participation and leadership in neighborhood-based groups/organizations;
- Invest in and build on the existing strengths and assets of the region's neighborhoods; and
- Promote civic pride in our community.



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