

Steven Robertson

From: john newell <newelljohn2000@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 01, 2013 10:37 PM
To: Charles Froseth
Subject: Mountain bike trails

As a Life long Duluth resident i believe we have many wonderful areas to enjoy the outdoors which many of us do. With that being said I think taking care of our depleted roadways would be more needed than bike trails, although I am a mountain biker myself I think for tourism and people coming to Duluth for mountain biking the roads getting to those trails I feel is more important. Think about it roads are more important we use them everyday so please consider fixing them rather than bandaid fixes. Thank you sincerely John Newell

Steven Robertson

From: Fitzpatrick, Joshua MVP <Joshua.T.Fitzpatrick@usace.army.mil>
Sent: Monday, February 04, 2013 1:08 PM
To: Charles Froseth
Subject: "Duluth Traverse" Mountain Bike Trail System (UNCLASSIFIED)

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: NONE

Hi Mr. Froseth,

I noticed the City of Duluth's sustainable multi-use natural-surface single-track trail system for mountain biking listed in the EQB Monitor. I would just send a caution that if there are wetland or stream impacts from the project you would have to submit an wetland permit application to the Army Corps of Engineers.

If there are wetland impacts from the project I would be the reviewer of the application. If you have any questions for me please let me know.

Thank you,

Josh Fitzpatrick
Regulatory Project Manager
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
St. Paul District-Two Harbors Field Office
651-290-5694
Joshua.T.Fitzpatrick@usace.army.mil

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: NONE

Comments on the Duluth Traverse Environmental Assessment Worksheet
By
John C. Green

The following Comments are referenced to the section number and page number of the EAW.

1.2.6.b, Description, p. 6, nr bottom: “small trees . . .” It’s a bit unclear from this paragraph whether all “large” trees (no criteria given) will be avoided. The use of “normally” and “except in special circumstances” lead to ambiguity.

Same, bottom: who will close the trail if conditions dictate? City Parks & Rec?

1.2.6.d, p. 8: Since this EAW is entitled “‘Duluth Traverse’ Mountain Bike Trail System”, it should cover the whole anticipated system, not just Phase 1 of construction. If this system rises to anywhere near the level of popularity and use advertised by COGGS, there are sure to be increased demands on parking facilities at trailheads, which are not identified or evaluated in this EAW. The last sentence suggests that “future development” will escape environmental review if it happens incrementally.

1.2.7, Project magnitude, Phase 1, p. 8. What is a “linear acre”? A self-contradiction?

1.2.8, Permits required, p. 9: Which of these involve(s) Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, as a special dedicated use of city property?

1.2.9, Land use, p. 9: Last sentence: there may be “significant issues” with the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, which should be addressed. How are the proposers coordinating with the managing entity, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory?

The Traverse is shown as sharing use of a section of the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT’s Hawk Ridge Spur), but this definitely involves “significant issues” of trail alignment, design, and user right-of-way which should be discussed.

1.2.11.a, Fish, wildlife, etc., p. 10. Paragraph 1 might include hares, voles, and frogs.

Paragraph 2: How can “construction effects” be scheduled so as to avoid interfering with bird migration (spring and fall) and nesting (the rest of the season)? This seems an unlikely claim.

1.2.11.b, Paragraph 2 of answer, p. 10. A search for the two identified threatened and endangered plant species was conducted on only the Hawk Ridge area of the proposed trail, a small portion that is not well indicated on any map. As far as I can tell, neither is in the Phase 1 portion. What is the basis for the last sentence, “No endangered or threatened species were identified in the proposed Phase 1 construction segments”? To say nothing of the whole rest of the proposed Duluth Traverse system, which this EAW is claimed to cover.

I see no evaluation of the anticipated impact of invasive exotic species that are likely to be introduced by mountain bike use.

1.2.16, Erosion . . . , top of P. 12: BMP for erosion control should require revegetation with native species only.

1.2.21, Traffic, p. 13-14: Are there no trailheads with no parking areas? Certainly all users will not use their bikes from home to access this trail. As this is apparently the EAW for the whole Traverse, there are sure to be access points or trailheads where riders will park. And especially with the tourism-promoting advocacy, nonresidents are encouraged to use the trail system, thus needing parking spaces.

1.2.25, Nearby resources, p. 15: Other unique resources? I don't believe a rare plant survey has been done for the Duluth Traverse as a whole (only a partial one for the Hawk Ridge area). This should be done and reported before any construction begins.

Also, the trail goes through the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve, a specially established area managed by the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory. Use of this trail should not interfere with this primary use of this area, especially during the fall migration season.

The SHPO letter on their Technical Report should be made available.

Finally, the Traverse shares part of its route with the pre-existing Superior Hiking Trail (west of Hawk Ridge). Riders must be made aware of the right-of-way priority of hikers on this section.

1.2.29, Cumulative potential effects, p. 16: Future projects, "those that are actually planned or for which a basis of expectation has been laid." This would include all the miles of trails shown on the maps (Figs 1,2,4,5). All of these should have rare-plant surveys done before constructions starts.

2.1, Summary of issues, p. 17-18 :

Fish, Wildlife, Sensitive Resources: need plant surveys to avoid impacts. Care taken to avoid disturbance to migrating raptors and programs of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory.

Odors, Noise, Dust. There will be considerable noise from power equipment locally during trail construction.

Designated Parks. The project will not just link city parks, it will cut through them.

Mitigation Measures. Answer states that Phase 1 will require a crossing of a DNR Protected Water. Which one? Where? This is too vague.

3.1, RGU Certification, p. 19: This statement declares that this EAW describes the complete project, not just Phase 1, but much of it seems to relate mostly to Phase 1, and the rest is described only very sketchily if at all – just shown as lines on a small-scale map. This is a major problem.

John C. Green, Ph.D
1754 Old North Shore Road
Duluth, MN 55804





March 4, 2013

Keith Hamre
Director of Planning and Construction Services
411 West 1st Street Room 208
Duluth, MN 55802-1191

RE: DULUTH TRAVERSE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL SYSTEM EAW

Dear Mr. Hamre:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Northeast Region has reviewed the Duluth Traverse Mountain Bike Trail System Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). We offer the following for your consideration.

1. The EAW should include lists of terrestrial invasive plants and locations in and near the trail locations, as well as, species in the vicinity that could be a threat. Buckthorn and garlic mustard are of particular concern. DNR maintains a GIS dataset for terrestrial invasive plant species available at: http://deli.dnr.state.mn.us/data_catalog.html. See Environmental Quality, Invasive Species – Terrestrial Observations.
2. Section 1.2.6d.
In regard to potential for future parking areas, the EAW speculates that new parking areas might be needed. Determining potential locations would be relevant to this review as opposed to waiting for the trail construction to be completed and then possibly finding out that parking areas cannot be found in appropriate areas.
3. Section 1.2.11a.
Please add more discussion of bird species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Refer to the the State Wildlife Action Plan at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwcs/index.html>) and as discussed in the attached "Mission Creek Ecological Evaluation (MN DNR Biological Report No. 104)". Refer to page 5 and Appendix A.
4. Section 1.2.11b.
Please change the no response to yes. There are rare Native Plant Communities (NPCs) and other sensitive ecological resources on or near the site outlined below. GIS datasets are available on the DNR Data Deli at: http://deli.dnr.state.mn.us/data_catalog.html. Review MCBS Native Plant Communities and MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance. The EAW should include a map of the MBS Sites that the trail falls within.
 - a. the S2 NPC, MHn44b (White Pine – White Spruce – Paper Birch Forest), is mapped by MBS in numerous locations within the Mission Creek site;
 - b. the S1 NPC, CTn11e (Dry Sandstone Cliff), is mapped in a few areas within the Mission Creek site. In particular, the area of trail south of State Hwy 210 may intersect this NPC.

- c. The S2 NPC, RVx54a (Slumping Clay/Mud River Slope), is mapped in a few areas within the Mission Creek site in the vicinity of the trail on the slopes to Mission Creek. These would be areas where soil conditions would likely prohibit sustainable trail construction and maintenance and should be avoided.
- d. We recommend that trail alignment should be shown to first avoid these areas. If avoidance isn't possible, then efforts should be made to minimize trail impacts in these areas (e.g. taking the shortest path possible given slope, etc.).

In addition to determining potential impacts to rare species, this section should also include a review of potential impacts to any Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Sites of Biodiversity Significance and MBS Native Plant Communities.

This section also states that the NHIS was reviewed for species within a threshold range; however, the range is never specified. It is typical to use a one-mile radius from the proposed project and to assess whether there is any potential habitat for the identified rare species within the project footprint. Using an approximate one-mile radius, it looks like pale sedge (*Carex pallescens*), a state-listed endangered plant, and the Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), a state-listed threatened turtle, have also been found in the vicinity of the proposed trail. Will any potential habitat for these species be impacted? It is also unclear if any state-listed plant species of special concern have been documented in the immediate vicinity of the proposed trail. If so, will there be any efforts to avoid these plants? The DNR recommends that licensees submit their review of ecologically-sensitive resources to the DNR Endangered Species Review Coordinator for concurrence prior to publishing an EAW.

There was no consultation with the DNR Endangered Species Review Coordinator regarding the rare species survey. The Division of Ecological and Water Resources makes every effort to coordinate closely with project proposers or their consultants in order to establish appropriate survey protocol. We request that survey proposals be submitted to us for review prior to any rare species survey work. The proposals are reviewed for appropriate target species, appropriate time of year, and appropriate survey areas. We also review the qualifications of the botanical consultants performing the surveys. This process is an attempt to avoid any potential problems or project delays due to miscommunication, inappropriate survey protocol, or erroneously identified threatened or endangered species.

In this particular case, please note the following concerns:

- It is unclear whether the survey included all of the appropriate target species or whether it covered all potential habitats. It would be useful if the survey results included a map of the area that was surveyed.
- One of the target species was triangle moonwort (*Botrychium lanceolatum*). Given the difficulty of identifying species within the genus *Botrychium*, this survey work must be conducted by a botanist with demonstrated experience identifying *Botrychium* species. It is unclear from the documentation provided whether Suzanne Sanders and her personnel have this experience.
- The June 2 survey date is not ideal for the two species being surveyed. The best time to survey for auricled twayblade (*Listera auriculata*) is when it is in peak flower,

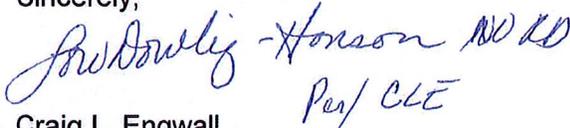
typically around the 4th of July. The best time to survey for triangle moonwort is from early June to mid-August.

Please contact the DNR Endangered Species Review Coordinator, Lisa Joyal, at 651-259-5109, or lisa.joyal@state.mn.us. More information is needed before the DNR can make a determination regarding impacts to state-listed species.

5. 1.216.
Mission Creek is dominated by highly erodible clay soils that are prone to slumping on slopes. Seeps also occur in these soil types on slopes. Please understand the potential severity of these conditions.
6. 1.2.19b
NRCS soil classifications are available for this area and would provide a better understanding of soil conditions and limitations.
7. 1.2.21.
Potential volume of use and need for parking areas is not addressed adequately. If Duluth truly becomes a destination for mountain biking, parking areas, current and future, should be more specifically addressed in the EAW.
8. 1.2.25.
Other unique resources could be answered yes for trout streams, old growth forest in Magney Snively and Jay Cooke State Park (SP), and the large generally intact landscape-level forest condition in and around Mission Creek, Jay Cooke SP, and Magney-Snively. Hemlock Ravine Scientific & Natural Area is within the Mission Creek/Jay Cooke SP area. Magney Snively has been considered for Scientific & Natural Area designation repeatedly since at least the 1980s. Although it is not technically a SNA, it is of outstanding quality and easily qualifies for SNA designation. Mission Creek is classified by MBS as a Site of High Biodiversity Significance and is described in detail in the attached ecological evaluation, "Mission Creek Forest".
9. Figure 4 shows campsites. Are these parts of the Duluth Traverse and new construction, or existing campsites? This is not mentioned in the text of the EAW.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Duluth Traverse Mountain Bike Trail System EAW. Please feel free to contact me or Rian Reed (218) 999-7826 with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Per/ CLE

Craig L. Engwall
Northeast Regional Director
(218) 999-7913
craig.engwall@state.mn.us



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

520 Lafayette Road North | St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-4194 | 651-296-6300

800-657-3864 | 651-282-5332 TTY | www.pca.state.mn.us | Equal Opportunity Employer

March 6, 2013

Mr. Charles Froseth
Land Use Supervisor
City of Duluth
411 West First Street, Room 208
Duluth, MN 55802

Re: Duluth Traverse – Phase I Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Dear Mr. Froseth:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the Duluth Traverse – Phase I project (Project) in Duluth, Minnesota. The Project consists of construction of a multi-use recreational trail system. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) staff has reviewed the EAW and have no comments at this time.

Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this EAW, please contact me at 651-757-2508.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Kromar".

Karen Kromar
Planner Principal
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK:bt

cc: Craig Affeldt, MPCA, St. Paul
Patrick Carey, MPCA, Duluth