

To: Wehle Core Team Members
From: Casey Holzworth
Re: Trail Assessment Site Visit – Wehle State Park

Based on the recommendation of the Core Team, Dan Heneka, John Shultz, Bob Smolka and I conducted a field evaluation of the park's trail system on April 20, 2010 for the purpose of assessing the need to re-route or close trails due to their location or condition. During this visit we walked sections of trails that were under evaluation by the Core Team for closure or relocation. Also, sections of trails that were either identified as being located in NWI wetlands or as "wet areas" on the Albany GIS Unit's preliminary map were checked.

Photos were taken of each area and are shown below. Each area was numbered and the number is keyed to the attached site location map with an arrow indicating the direction of the photo. Adjacent to each photo is a brief overview of the field evaluation and also a recommendation for action.

During the survey Dan, John and I agreed to the following actions:

- The portion of the Dancing Dog trail adjacent to the property line fence (1) and the trail noted as the "Jungle cutoff" (10) would both be removed from use due to their duplicative nature and wetland considerations.
- A small loop of the Jungle trail that crosses the Marksman trail twice will be removed. The remaining trail will be named both Jungle and Marksman. (2)

The following trail sections will be further evaluated by John for trail surface issues or possible removal from the trail system:

- The north-south un-named trail between Dancing Dog and the access road along the firing range. This trail was narrow and rugged and seemed to pose a maintenance problem. Both Dancing Dog and the access road accomplish a very similar trail connectivity goal. However, this trail may be favored by mountain bikers for its more difficult terrain. (3)
- The un-named trail south of the rental compound that connects the north-south un-named trail from Huckleberry to Marksman with the access road. (4)
- The two areas of the Jungle trail on either side of the intersection with the Snakefoot that intersect with the mapped boundary of NWI wetlands have been inspected by John. His evaluation is that both areas are wet but passable. John is asked to provide pictures of the trail to add to this documentation. (5)

The trail sections 1, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 14 appear to be located within federal wetland areas and, if not re-routed around the wetland, next steps to address these areas may be subject to federal regulation. ACOE Nationwide Permit 42 allows for the discharge of fill into "waters of the US" (i.e. federal wetlands) for the purpose of recreational activities including hiking trails. This permit could be used; however, the total fill area of all proposed improvements would have to be below a ½ acre threshold. These permits can be obtained; however, a more detailed survey would be required to demonstrate that no feasible alternatives for avoiding the wetlands exist. The construction of a boardwalk over these areas would not require a permit, however, the possible minimal depth to bedrock and our use of large mowing equipment for management may make boardwalks difficult.

As a general note, the map does not do justice to the size of the park and the distances between features. Turns or intersections shown on the map seemed much farther in the field than they should have been based on the map. I'm not sure what could be done to correct this misinterpretation, however, the large dimensions used to display the Snakefoot trail on the current map may add to this issue.

1. Dancing Dog – The area near the fence line was not indicated to be wet, however, inspection found a roughly 50' wetland crossing with areas of the trail completely submerged. This trail was recommended for closure due to trail planning considerations (two trails, same name and destination) and the presence of this wetland crossing supports that decision.

Regulated by: Army Corps

Recommended action: Trail removal



6. Knickerbocker – This site was confirmed as a wetland crossing. The crossing is narrow (15-20') and there did not appear to be an easy re-route around the wetland. Trail was still passable in the middle.

Regulated by: Army Corps

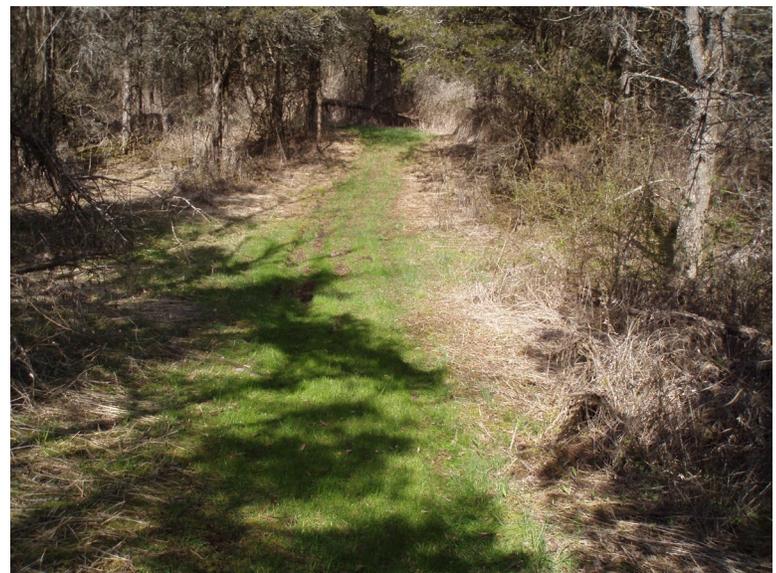
Recommended action: Boardwalk



7. Dancing Dog – The area marked as wet at the northern limits of the trail was not very wet upon inspection. Clay-based soils may eventually become wetland but plant community did not show full wetland characteristics. Area was soft but no surface water was present.

Regulated by: None

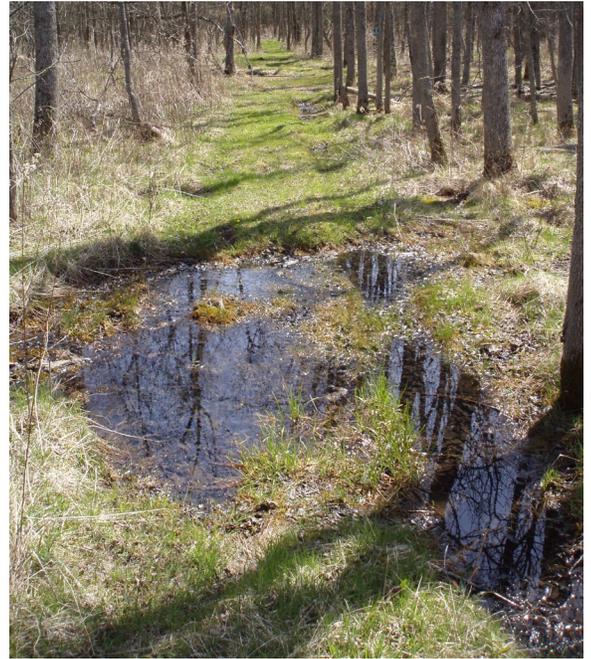
Recommended action: None



8. Marksman – Wet spot location indicates area of compaction and rutting that has caused relatively deep pools of standing water (approx. 40' long), however, the trail in this area passes through approx. 150' of wetlands that are currently passable.

Regulated by: Army Corps

Recommended action: Multiple Boardwalks or re-route



9. Jungle Cut-off – A culvert to the right of this picture, under the north-south portion of the Jungle Trail, connects this wetland area to the large wetland complex extending across military road and beyond the park boundary. According to John, this wet area, measuring approximately 60', is only passable in the driest of times.

Regulated by: Army Corps and DEC

Recommended action: Trail removal



10. Snakefoot – 1000' south of the intersection with Marksman/Park Road. Approx. 30' impounded wet area through larger wetland crossing.

Regulated by: Army Corps

Recommended action: Boardwalk or Trail re-route



11. Bobolink – Approx. 40' wetland crossing with an approx. 20' surface water crossing. Wetland does not extend far to the north = possible re-route.

Regulated by: Army Corps

Recommended action: Boardwalk or Trail re-route



12. Bobolink – Portion of trail through sensitive alvar area. Alvar does not extend far to the north (left) (25') but does extend far to the south (right) (450'+). This trail appears to be on the edge of the alvar area. Moving the trail any further out of the area would not provide the educational opportunity that this crossing provides. The current location does a reasonably good job of limiting travel to the outskirts of the area.

Recommendation: no re-route



12. Bobolink – Close-up of trail through sensitive alvar area. Additionally, although there is certainly some damage to the alvar within the path of the trail, the trail is not devoid of alvar vegetation and has not been severely eroded.

Recommendation: The placement of large stones as a border to provide for a more clearly defined trail and keep visitors and equipment from unnecessarily leaving the trail.



13. Huckleberry – Area of trail through pavement barrens just east of intersection with un-named trail headed south. Un-named trail to the south (14) was planned to become the new alignment of Huckleberry and this portion of Huckleberry was to be closed. The un-named trail(14) appeared to travel along a relatively clear edge of the pavement barrens, which extended to the north of the trail while Huckleberry appeared to traverse directly through the barrens, each providing a different experience of the barrens.

Recommendation: further evaluation



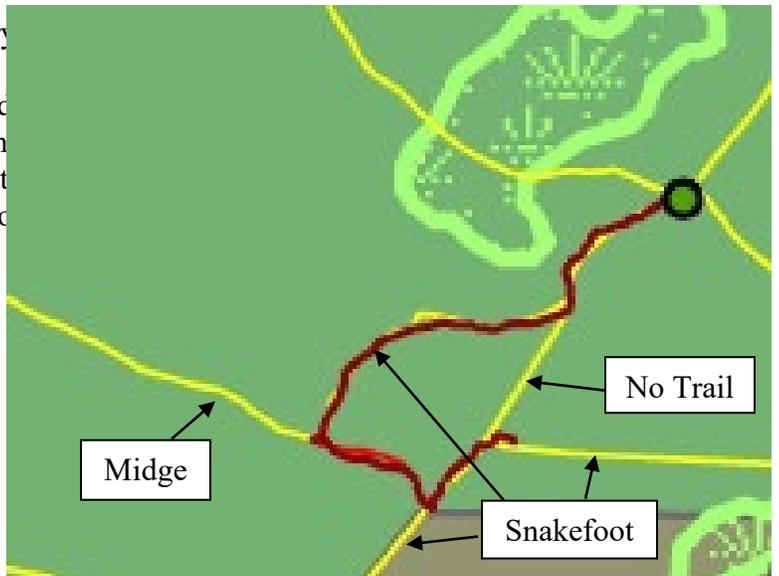
15. Un-named trail headed north from Huckleberry Trail – this trail, too, goes through the middle of pavement barrens. The trail also crosses a wetland just south of the intersection with the other un-named trail that connects to the utility access road. No wetlands were identified on the second un-named trail (4) or the nearby Midge trail suggesting that the wetland may be small in nature and that a re-route may be possible to avoid wetlands.

Regulated by: Army Corps

Recommended action: Boardwalk or Trail re-route



16. Snakefoot/Midge – This section of trail was very close to the intersection does not exist. The trail to the south is considered to be part of Snakefoot. On the ground, the trail is considered to be part of Snakefoot. The completion of the Snakefoot trail heading north from the intersection where the Snakefoot trail splits and the Midge trail re-alignment is complete, the current cut-around should be removed.



Wehle State Park Trails Assessment Location Map

 NWI Wetlands

 DEC Wetlands

0 500 1,000 2,000 Feet