The Origins of Wisc

Ray Zillmer's Path

by Sarah

U.S. Representative Henry Reuss (front row, right) leads hikers on the Ice Age Trail. Reuss worked with Raymond Zillmer and Gaylord Nelson to create the 1,000-mile long trail.

With the end of the Ice Age about ten thousand years ago, the climate warmed and slowly disintegrated a mile-high wall of ice known as the late Wisconsin Glacier. Like an enormous conveyor belt, the retreating glacier deposited loads of sediment along its southern edge, leaving a strip of gravelly hills that demarcated its final reach.[1] Known as the terminal moraine, this serpentine strip preserves the memory of the glacier and serves as a reminder of Wisconsin's geologic past. In the late 1950s, Raymond T. Zillmer, a Milwaukee attorney, recognized that by shaping Wisconsin's physical landscape, the glacier had helped shape the state's cultural landscape. He believed that "geological and geographical factors . . . determine, in a broad sense, the activities and history of our country."[2] In 1958, he proposed a national park, the Wisconsin Glacier National Forest Park, to protect the state's unique geologic features and, further, to enlighten people about the influence the glaciers had on the history of the state.

The proposed park was unlike any national park in existence. Instead of a tight green cluster concentrated within a concise area on a map, Zillmer's park was an elegant 500-mile line tracing the path of the terminal moraine. Unlike other national parks, it was located in a landscape devoid of rugged mountains, vast deserts, and ocean vistas—the conventional ingredients of wilderness. Instead, the proposed Wisconsin park snaked through working forests, abandoned farms, and rural communities. Although the park has been known by several names, including Wisconsin Glacier National Forest Park, Moraine National Park, Ice Age National Park, and finally its current designation as the Ice Age National Scenic Trail—its official purpose has remained the same: to protect and celebrate the effects of continental glaciation.[3] By protecting the state's geologic past, the project's objective was to help people understand the role of the physical environment in shaping human history and, more generally, to help people cultivate an appreciation of nature and outdoor activity.
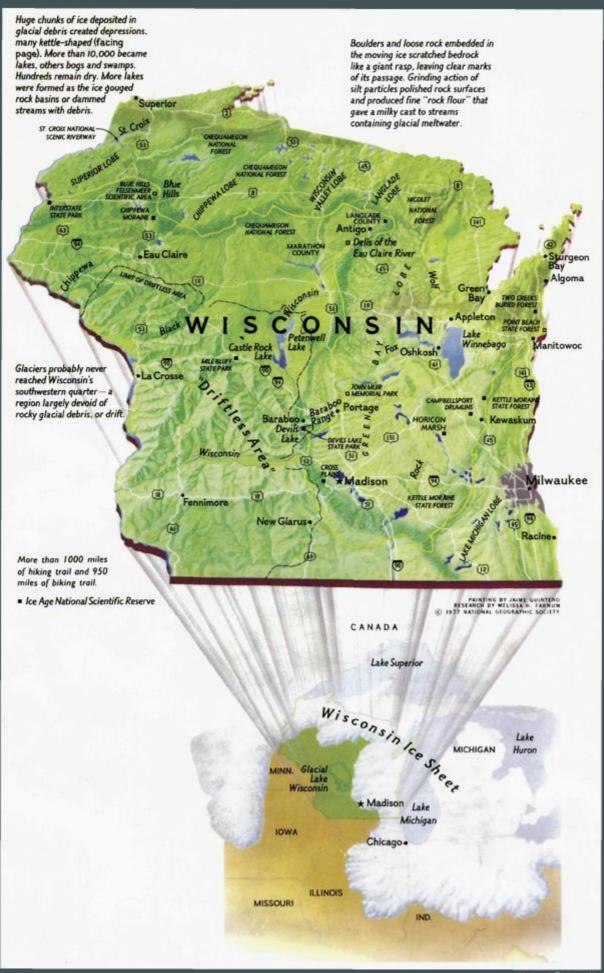

Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel

Attorney and conservationist Raymond Zillmer devoted the last years of his life to the preservation of Wisconsin's glacial landscape and the creation of the National Scenic Ice Age Trail, which became part of the National Scenic Trail System in 1980–twenty years after his death.

The idea for a continuous 500-mile park—which later morphed into a 1000-mile trail—began in the Kettle Moraine, a section of rolling hills located about forty-five minutes west of Milwaukee. Starting in the 1920s, the Milwaukee Chapter of the Izaak Walton League worked to protect the area for recreational purposes. The Izaak Walton League was, and continues to be, a national conservation organization dedicated to protecting our natural heritage and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation by using local volunteer chapters. As president of the Milwaukee Chapter, Zillmer led the effort that established the northern and southern units of the Kettle Moraine State Forest in the late 1930s and 1940s. By 1958, the area was known as the "nucleus" of the larger national park proposal.[4]
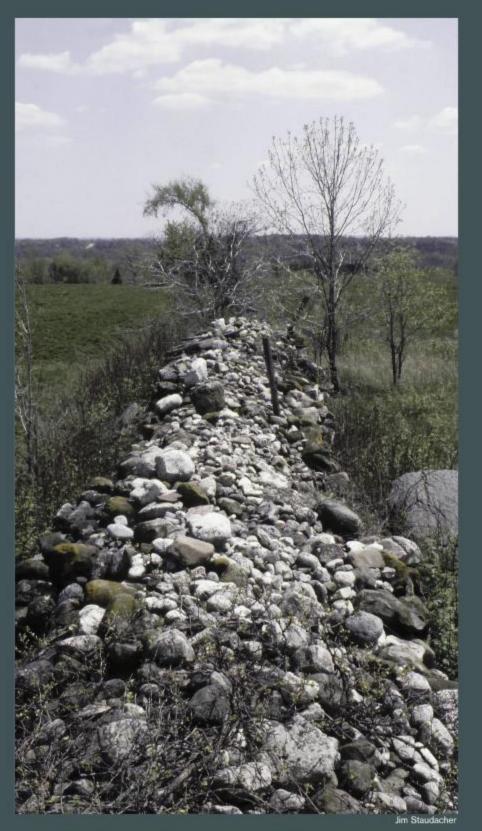
In his work to protect the Kettle Moraine, Ray Zillmer developed a philosophy of conservation that was broader than conventional rationales for establishing national parks. According to historian Alfred Runte, Congress designated the first national parks in the West for their value as scenic monuments, starting with Yellowstone in 1872. The early parks primarily served a symbolic function because most Americans could not actually visit them.[5] However, with the development of the railroads, hoards of wealthy easterners seeking wild, untamed nature traveled to the western parks. These visiting masses, which John Muir referred to as the "thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people," looked to wilderness in the West to balance the mental and spiritual chaos of an increasingly urban and industrial society back East.[6] In the 1980s, in response to these flocks of tourists, Congress began recognizing national parks for their recreational value, along with their scenic and symbolic value.[7]

Since the late nineteenth century, Americans have wanted their national parks to contain remote, mysterious, and undeveloped lands. The wilderness protection movement gained political momentum in the early twentieth century during the interwar period, boomed again in the 1950s with the rise of outdoor recreation, and eventually exploded with the 1964

Huge chunks of ice deposited in glacial debris created depressions, many kettle-shaped (facing page). More than 10,000 became lakes, others bogs and swamps. Hundreds remain dry. More lakes were formed as the ice gouged rock basins or dammed streams with debris.

Boulders and loose rock embedded in the moving ice scratched bedrock like a giant rasp, leaving clear marks of its passage. Grinding action of silt particles polished rock surfaces and produced fine "rock flour" that gave a milky cast to streams containing glacial meltwater.

National Geographic map of the Ice Age Trail, ca. 1977

Superior

St. Croix

ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY

SUPERIOR LOBE

CHEQUAMEGON NATIONAL FOREST

BLUE HILLS FELSENMEER SCIENTIFIC AREA

Blue Hills

CHIPPEWA MORAINE

INTERSTATE STATE PARK

Chippewa

CHEQUAMEGON NATIONAL FOREST

CHIPPEWA LOBE

WISCONSIN VALLEY LOBE

LANGLADE LOBE

NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST

LANGLADE COUNTY

Antigo

Dells of the Eau Claire River

Eau Claire

MARATHON COUNTY

LIMIT OF DRIFTLESS AREA

LOBE

Wolf

Sturgeon Bay

Algoma

Green Bay

TWO CREEKS BURIED FOREST

POINT BEACH STATE FOREST

Appleton

Wisconsin

Black

W I S C O N S I N

Petenwell Lake

Lake Winnebago

Manitowoc

Castle Rock Lake

MILE BLUFF STATE PARK

Fox

Oshkosh

BAY

La Crosse

JOHN MUIR MEMORIAL PARK

CAMPBELLSPORT DRUMLINS

KETTLE MORAINE STATE FOREST

Glaciers probably never reached Wisconsin's southwestern quarter — a region largely devoid of rocky glacial debris, or drift.

"Driftless Area"

Baraboo Range

Portage

HORICON MARSH

Kewaskum

Baraboo

Devils Lake

DEVILS LAKE STATE PARK

GREEN

Wisconsin

CROSS PLAINS

★ Madison

Rock

Milwaukee

Fennimore

Madison

New Glarus

KETTLE MORAINE STATE FOREST

LAKE MICHIGAN LOBE

Racine

More than 1000 miles of hiking trail and 950 miles of biking trail.

■ Ice Age National Scientific Reserve

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RESEARCH BY MELISSA H. FARNUM
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CANADA

Lake Superior

Wisconsin Ice Sheet

MINN.

Glacial Lake Wisconsin

MICHIGAN

Lake Huron

IOWA

★ Madison

Lake Michigan

Chicago

ILLINOIS

MISSOURI

IND.

National Geographic

Jim Staudacher

Zillmer admired landscapes that showed how people had lived and worked with the terrain. This fence between two fields near Dundee, ca. 1979, was built of glacial erratic stones.

Wilderness Act. Yet, despite the societal obsession with wilderness, Zillmer remained relatively indifferent about trying to protect distant, virgin landscapes. In an essay entitled "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," historian William Cronon explains that "idealizing a distant wilderness too often means not idealizing the environments in which we actually live, the landscape that for better or worse we call home."[8] Zillmer understood this dilemma, and, although he appreciated undeveloped land, he celebrated working landscapes. Instead of rugged mountain landscapes of the West, he envisioned spaces for outdoor recreation that provided opportunities to experience both wild and working landscapes. He believed that by hiking and camping in places "where some poor devil beat his life out trying to coax a living from the glacial gravel," citizens could learn about their agrarian heritage.[9] This experience might help people develop a connection with the land. Further, people would recognize the area as a space full of memories that acted as a reminder of their heritage, not as a primeval place to flee from society. For Zillmer, connecting with nature could occur just as easily in "commonplace" landscapes as in wilderness.

Zillmer's ideas about nature and its relationship to wilderness were influenced by several trips to Europe. European hiking trails were not generally constructed in wilderness landscapes; rather, they traversed working farms and wandered through rural villages. He admired European trail systems. Upon returning from a three-month trip through Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy, Zillmer reported that "[a]fter seeing what has been done in Europe in the matter of trails and camp sites I am more enthusiastic than ever about our National Park program."[10] Additionally, these

trips to Europe prompted him to consider the demographics of national park users and the appropriate location of national parks in relation to population density.

Zillmer emphasized the need to make nature more accessible to those who need it most—working Americans in the nation's heartland. Many Wisconsinites believed that the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 would shift the demographic center of the nation from the East Coast to the Midwest. As a result, the *Janesville Daily Gazette* reported that the proposed park would help fulfill the recreational needs of the entire country.[11] In addition to fulfilling a national need, Zillmer recognized the importance of developing recreational areas for Wisconsin residents. He complained that the southern part of Wisconsin contained most of the state's people, but the fewest places for outdoor recreation. Zillmer wrote to M. W. Torkelson of the Wisconsin State Planning Board:

Copper Falls, Devil's Lake, the Wisconsin Dells and the bluffs of the Peninsula State Park are magnificent and should be preserved. But we should not make the mistake of overlooking the aesthetic and recreational value of that scenery which is commonplace, the hills and streams and farmlands of southern Wisconsin, which are so much more available to the people who need outdoor recreation.[12]

Zillmer was aware of the irony of believing that nature had to be far away, and he thought driving long distances to "get in touch with nature" was a waste of time and energy. Why should the people of Wisconsin drive thousands of miles to Yellowstone National Park, or the people of Milwaukee drive hundreds of miles to northern Wisconsin to catch a brief glimpse of nature when they could experience it in their own county?

In promoting the Kettle Moraine State Forest, Zillmer pointed out that its close proximity to urban populations in the southeastern part of the state saved the people of Milwaukee "tires, gasoline, automobile wear and tear, and most important of all, time, as against Northern Wisconsin, 300 miles away."[13] He often stressed how the long, linear shape of the larger park would provide easier access for all of Wisconsin's residents, as it could be "reached by almost everyone in the state in an hour's drive," while a "compact park in one area may require a half or whole day's drive."[14]

Long drives to get to a wilderness required more time sitting passively in cars and resulted in less time being active in the outdoors. Zillmer blamed the automobile and other "ingenious labor-saving devices" for the declining physical health of American citizens. He believed that the simple act of walking could help produce healthier Americans.

To promote public health, Zillmer wanted to create recreational spaces close to where people worked and lived, so that they could get outside and defy the plague of laziness that had begun to sweep the country. In January 1958, he wrote to Wisconsin Conservation Commission director Guido Rahr:

I have always believed that if our country is overcome by the Russians, it will not be because of Communism or weapons of war, but because their people are physically strong and our own people have deteriorated physically and mentally, largely because of our wonderful labor-saving devices which are making all of us lazy.[15]

WHi Image ID 45340

Kettle holes like this near Bloomer were created when giant ice cubes left by the glaciers melted and destabilized the surrounding soil.

Zillmer often wrote how a strong "primitive" people would always overcome a weak, "decadent" people. He feared that the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the average American was declining and proposed the national park as a place to combat the decadence of laziness and the erosion in personal character that it caused. He believed that the nation needed citizens with sound bodies and minds and wrote, "To keep our people efficient for their work and to keep many from being delinquent, requires that they use the outdoors to keep them fit physically, mentally, and spiritually."[16] For Zillmer, outdoor recreation was much more than a leisure-time pursuit; it ensured America's physical, cultural, and moral strength.

However, before pitching the project to the national public and soliciting support from the federal government, Zillmer realized that first he must demonstrate that the people of Wisconsin understood and supported the idea for a 500-mile linear park. He maintained that the park was to be a project designed by and developed for local people. In 1958, he organized the Citizens Committee for the Moraine National Park, a network of local leaders, to build public awareness and political momentum for the park and to help lobby for the project across the state. For tax purposes, he established a separate organization called the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, which had a modest membership fee to ensure everyone's involvement was affordable. A woman from Arena became its first official member with a one dollar contribution.[17]

Before becoming a lawyer in 1914, Zillmer had earned a PhD in political science, which he taught for a year at the University of Wisconsin. His understanding of political science proved to be essential in his voluntary career as a conservationist, providing the skills he needed to marshal support from people who represented all walks of life; from business and political leaders to religious authorities and labor organizers. Zillmer considered nearly any interest group to be a potential ally of the proposed park and wrote to scout masters of local Boy Scout troops, as well as the presidents of northern timber companies, such as the Weyerhaeuser Company and the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company of Wisconsin Rapids.

For the project to be successful, Zillmer believed it needed to be profitable for the people living in the communities along its route. The rural landscape of Wisconsin had changed dramatically during the 1950s, when the suburbs sprawled and leisure time increased. As a result, farmers and loggers relied

Jim Staudacher

"Angle Rock" is located along the St. Croix River. It was created when the glacier retreated and drained Glacial Lake Duluth, which caused the massive flooding that molded the dramatic cliffs. Today it's a hot spot for cliff jumpers and rock climbers.

Jim Staudacher

Backpackers Mark Radke (left) and James Staudacher on the Ice Age Trail near Ridge Run Park, West Bend, May 1979. During the summer of 1979, Staudacher was the first person to hike the entire Ice Age Trail.

WHi Image ID 45350

This typical moraine—a ridge of sand and stone left by the glaciers—in Walworth County is one of many that define the route of the Ice Age Trail.

more on other sources of income, and outdoor recreation became an important component of the rural economy. Rural inhabitants, who once cultivated corn, raised cows, or harvested lumber, began to produce an "experience" of nature to be consumed by visiting tourists, and Zillmer received letters from resort owners who expressed their interest in the park's income-generating potential. For example, Jerome Roltgen, owner of the Kettle Moraine Farm Vacation Home in Glenbeulah, wrote to Zillmer to learn more about the rock formations nearby. He wanted to educate his guests about the local geology to promote his business.[18]

Other Wisconsinites were less eager to embrace the park proposal, however, and occasionally Zillmer's efforts to recruit local support for the park failed. For example, Zillmer sent a letter to Stanton W. Mead, president of the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company, explaining the movement to establish a national park that would feature Wisconsin's glacial history. He explained that many miles of the Appalachian Trail in Maine ran through lumber companies' private lands and that the relationship between lumbermen and trail supporters was generally amiable. Zillmer also cited an editorial in the December 1958 issue of *Harpers' Magazine* that explained how sixty-five lumber companies across the nation had established public parks on their land. Using these precedents, Zillmer emphasized that timber production and outdoor recreation could be compatible uses of the forest.[19]

When he asked Mead if the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Company would be willing to support the proposed park, Mead's thoughtful response expressed some typical concerns that hindered many private individuals from enthu-

siastically endorsing the proposal. First, for people without scientific training, Wisconsin's glacial landscape required interpretation and not all citizens shared Zillmer's passion for geology. Mead wrote, "While I greatly respect those who understand Geology, the subject happens to be a field of

Jim Staudacher

The Ice Age Trail serves the state's recreation needs year round.

Definitions of glacial features and where they can be found on the Ice Age Trail

Erratics: Like giant chocolate chips in a disintegrating ball of cookie dough, erratics are boulders that were frozen in the glacier and then deposited when the ice melted. Erratics are usually large, smooth and round. They are fairly easy to recognize because they tend to look nothing like the local bedrock. Erratics are ubiquitous along the trail, except where the path goes through sections of the Driftless Area—the section of southwestern Wisconsin that was never covered by glaciers. You may also see these large boulders lined up as fence rows, where farmers have removed them to plow a field.

WHi Image ID 45345

A sizeable example of a glacier-deposited erratic

Eskers: Rivers that flowed through horizontal tunnels at the bottom of the glacier deposited round, winding ridges of sand and gravel known as eskers. Eskers can be found in Polk and Taylor counties along the trail, but most notably in the northern unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest—the Parnell Esker.

Kames: Like eskers, kames were formed by streams flowing through the glacier. Instead of a horizontal flow leaving winding ridges, however, kames were formed by water flowing downward through vertical shafts in the glacier, leaving cone-shaped deposits of sand and cobble. According to the *Ice Age Trail Companion Guide 2006*, the Kettle Moraine area contains the "largest and most important kame fields in the world."

Kettle: In the mix of the sand and gravel deposits, the glaciers left large chunks of ice. When these massive ice cubes melted, they destabilized the surrounding material and created substantial holes in the ground—sometimes up to 100 feet deep. Like erratics, they are fairly ubiquitous along the trail.

Moraines: The glacier deposited ridges of sand, gravel, and boulders along its front end and outer edge. These areas are called moraines and they define the path of the trail.

Information from: *Ice Age Trail Companion Guide 2006*, Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, 2006.

learning which I passed by completely in my years of education."[20] Foreign-sounding geologic terms such as "eskers," "moraines," and "erratics" often meant little to Wisconsinites, many of whom were unimpressed by, indifferent to, or simply unaware of the state's glacial past.

In addition to the public's lack of knowledge or appreciation of geology, the regional politics of the state affected the relationship local communities had with the park proposal. Mead wrote Zillmer that citizens in the northern part of the state resented the notion that their backyards should serve as playgrounds for people from the southern regions of the state. In 1960, the Wisconsin Department of Research Development reported that of the six million vacationers in Wisconsin that year, out-of-state residents visited all parts of Wisconsin, while vacationing Wisconsin residents—primarily from the urban centers in the southeastern part of the state—tended to visit the northern counties.[21] In response to this trend Mead wrote, "We of the north country have industrial needs as do those of the southern sections of the state and we resist the concept that we are obligated to keep our area primitive or that we should furnish the recreational areas for the highly developed industrial areas."[22] This statement speaks to different forms of economic production between northern rural places and southern urban places. In it, Mead expressed the resentment northern residents occasionally felt towards the leisure-time activities of southern residents and the economic power southerners had to pursue those activities. Fueled by differences in class and regional identity, this antagonism complicated the task of convincing citizens from the northern counties to support the park.

Zillmer was familiar with the independent character of Wisconsin's northern residents, and he understood that if the park was to succeed in the North, it would have to have solid backing from its communities. In an attempt to organize local support, Zillmer wrote to O. J. Falge, an attorney from the northern town of Ladysmith in Rusk County. Zillmer explained the economic benefits from tourism that communities such as Ladysmith would reap from having a national park so close. He requested that Falge help organize a local committee to support the park, so that the National Park Service would not "neglect" the northern part of the state.[23] He reassured Falge that other northern communities such as Chippewa Falls, Stevens Point, and Antigo supported the proposal and emphasized that the park was not just a playground for Wisconsin's southern citizens, but it was also a recreational and economic resource for people in the North. As a state-wide collaboration, the park belonged to citizens in the northern counties just as much as it belonged to the state's southern citizens. Over time, the state's northern residents warmed up to the idea and, today, more than half of the twenty-four local chapters of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation are located in northern counties.

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View of the originally proposed Ice Age National Scientific Reserve, showing erratics at the base of the fence and a moraine in the background.

In addition to garnering local support in all regions of the state, Zillmer enlisted the help of state and federal officials. Although private donations might come from individuals, Zillmer believed that the state and federal government should take the lead in purchasing and managing the necessary land. When government officials expressed concern about funding such a project, Zillmer put the cost of the proposed park in perspective by pointing out the relative costs of other government-funded projects.

Zillmer was especially critical of public spending on highways. In a letter to the *Milwaukee Journal* he wrote, "We spend a lot to go faster. Let us spend a little to go slower."[24] The government often used the power of eminent domain to create roads and Zillmer wondered, "Why should the Conservation Department hesitate to condemn a few pieces of land when the Highway Department condemns millions of dollars of land each year? No highways could be built without condemnation. Why not for trails?"[25] In Zillmer's mind, the public benefited just as much from a place to hike as from a place to drive. Although other states, such as Virginia, had used the power of eminent domain to create the Shenandoah National Park in the 1920s and 1930s, Zillmer was unable to convince state and federal authorities that the Wisconsin park warranted such action.

In addition to their concern about how to finance the park and acquire the necessary land, government representatives wondered how such a massive project would be managed. The linear shape of the proposed 500-mile park made it an administrative nightmare in the minds of traditional land management agencies. Government bureaucrats working for the National Park Service or the Wisconsin Conservation Department were accustomed to managing public lands that were well-defined, not extended units that meandered across the state. Leo Diederich, Chief of Park Planning for the National Park Service in 1958, was quoted in the *Antigo Daily Journal*, "If Wisconsin people expect that there would be a continuous national park, 500 miles across Wisconsin, they should not have any such idea."[26] Diederich stressed that even if the government was able to buy the necessary lands for the proposed park, no one knew how to administer it. Before the National Scenic Trails System Act of 1968, there was simply no precedent for managing such a long, skinny unit of public land.

Until 1968, long-distance trails such as the Appalachian Trail, functioned primarily through the use of "handshake agreements" between trail supporters and local landowners. These agreements allowed hikers to simply walk across privately-owned lands without any formal contract between the landowner, trail clubs, or government agencies. In 1960, George Blackburn, secretary of the Appalachian Trail Conference, explained to Zillmer that "permission for a trail such as the Appalachian Trail or the one you are promoting . . . depends very greatly on establishing and maintaining good relations with the landowner."[27] When the interests of recreational users and private landowners clashed, there was no legal structure to mitigate the conflict, and private landowners always had the final say. As a result, long-distance trails tended to be continuous in concept, but fragmented in reality.

Zillmer knew that the best way to protect these linear recreational landscapes would be to turn them into public goods. He also understood that their unusual shape would require a new administrative approach to land management. Zillmer envisioned an administrative structure in which all levels of the government, including local, state, and federal agencies, would cooperate with private citizens and non-

WHi Image ID 45343

An Ice Age Trail air view taken by Jim Staudacher shows a combination of lands created by the glacier and cultivated by human hands.

WHi Image ID 45337

Senator Gaylord Nelson stands in front of the U. S. Capitol. A noted environmentalist, Nelson proposed the National Scenic Trails System Act to Congress in 1968.

Jim Staudacher

In 1980, when Congress established the Ice Age Trail as part of the National Scenic Trail System, Congressman Henry Reuss spoke at multiple dedication ceremonies as each new section of the Trail opened.

WHi Image ID 2290

Aldo Leopold, Zillmer's more famous contemporary in land conservation

profit conservation groups. Although Congress had rejected the first proposal for a new national park in Wisconsin, introduced by Representative Henry Reuss in 1958, Zillmer remained undaunted by the scale of the project. Working with notable leaders such as Reuss, Senator Gaylord Nelson, and others, Zillmer devoted the last three years of his life—from 1958 to 1960—almost entirely to the project.[28]

Ray Zillmer did not live to see the actualization of his ideas for the park. Despite his active lifestyle, which included hiking and snowshoe trips to the Kettle Moraine, his heart failed in late November 1960. As he lay on his death bed in the Milwaukee Hospital, he wrote to the *Milwaukee Journal* and expressed his concern about whether he would "be able to finish the Kettle Moraine–Ice Age Project or get it so far established that it will carry through on its own momentum."[29] Ray Zillmer died on December 13, 1960, and, without his dedication and leadership, the movement for a national park along the terminal moraine of the Wisconsin glacier lost its initial momentum.[30]

Even before Zillmer's death, after Congress had rejected the park proposal for the second time in 1959, Reuss had begun to seek compromises. When the National Park Service suggested preserving a concentrated area, as opposed to the continuous strip that Zillmer envisioned, Reuss agreed and

stated that "we aren't absolutely committed to a 500-mile long park. Our prime concern is getting for Wisconsin a park that will show the nation the effects of the Ice Age."[31] After Zillmer's death, Reuss temporarily set aside the idea of a long, linear park and worked with other congressmen to create the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve.

Established in 1964, the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve consisted of nine separate units that highlighted interesting geologic features in the landscape. Six of the units lay on the route proposed in Zillmer's original plan. Reuss hoped Congress eventually might connect these six units like "pearls on a string" and create the continuous landscape that Zillmer had envisioned.[32] In 1980, the six pearls were finally linked—at least on paper—and Zillmer's ambitious plan came closer to reality when the Ice Age Trail became part of the National Scenic Trail System. The Ice Age National Scientific Reserve system still exists today as a separate network administered by the Department of Natural Resources.

While he may not have been aware of it at the time, Zillmer's proposal to create a recreational landscape that would span 500 miles across Wisconsin was part of a broader movement to create a system of long-distance hiking trails in

America's hinterlands. Although Congress rejected the proposal in 1958 and again in 1959, the Wisconsin movement helped plant the seed for future initiatives. Three years after Zillmer's death in 1960, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson met Dr. Cecil Cullander of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club at a congressional fundraiser. When Cullander explained the club's struggle to protect the Appalachian Trail from private development, the experience resonated with Nelson's own experience working with Zillmer on Wisconsin's Glacier Park. Nelson figured, "[W]ell, hell, I might as well introduce a bill to preserve the Appalachian Trail," and, in 1968, he proposed the National Scenic Trails System Act to Congress.[33]

The 1968 National Scenic Trail System Act recognized the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail as the first two national scenic trails in the system and established a legal structure for developing other trails throughout the country. In addition to the legal recognition of national trails as a type of public land, the 1968 Act established a means to purchase land for the trails. It gave the federal government the authority to secure the right-of-way or to acquire land for trails if state and local governments failed to do so within two years. In 1978, however, Congress amended the 1968 Act and prohibited federal spending on land acquisition for the national scenic trails. Instead, the federal government was allowed to grant money only to state and local governments, or to non-profit conservation organizations, to purchase land for trails.[34]

In 1981, a year after the Ice Age Trail became part of the National Scenic Trail System and the idea to protect a long-distance space for outdoor recreation officially made it back to Wisconsin, Ronald Reagan took his seat in the Oval Office. With him came James Watt as the new Secretary of the Interior and additional obstacles. When Watt proclaimed that "I don't like to walk," trail advocates knew that the path to developing these long-distance routes would be difficult.[35] Despite the increasing recreational use of the Ice Age Trail, and the first "thru-hike" by Jim Staudacher of Milwaukee in 1979, land acquisitions occurred slowly during the early 1980s.

In the late 1980s, however, the State of Wisconsin took the lead on land acquisitions. The state legislature designated the Ice Age Trail as a State Scenic Trail in 1987 and established the Wisconsin Stewardship Program in 1989. The Stewardship Program allocated $5,000,000 over ten years to buy land for the Ice Age Trail. In 2000, the program was renewed—the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program—and the legislature allocated $30,000,000 over ten years for developing state trails, including the Ice Age Trail. In 1999, in addition to state funding, Congress began appropriating money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund to develop the Ice Age Trail by providing grants to state agencies and the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation.[36]

Despite these measures, the Ice Age Trail remains a work in progress. Today, as it snakes from its eastern terminus in Door County at Potawatomi State Park to its western terminus in Polk County along the St. Croix River, the path crosses a variety of landscapes—forests, farms, wetlands, prairies, rural communities, and even the suburbs of Madison. On average, the trail ranges from fifty to 1000 feet wide and, officially, it is approximately 1000 miles long. Yet, while the trail exists in its entirety on paper, only half of the 1000 miles have been developed.

In spite of the Ice Age Trail's fragmented existence, one thing is clear: the trail and the land that it crosses contain a vast history—not only about the state's geologic past, but also about the varied ways in which the land has shaped human experiences. In 1958, by protecting Wisconsin's unique glacial landscape, Ray Zillmer hoped to preserve the story of the people who hunted game, cultivated crops, and harvested timber along the path of the terminal moraine. In doing so, he hoped modern explorers might learn, not only about glaciers and the physical landscape that they helped to produce, but also about the hidden human history contained in the Wisconsin landscape.

Just as physical landscapes change as a result of geological and biological forces, our perceptions of them change as a result of the ideas and experiences of people. Since 1958, the thousands of people who have explored the Ice Age Trail as hikers, volunteers, or simply observers of nature, have become part of the Wisconsin landscape's history. In 1949, Aldo Leopold wrote, "Recreation, however, is not the outdoors, but our reaction to it."[37] Though Ray Zillmer never achieved the fame of Leopold—his contemporary in land conservation—Zillmer's proposal for the Wisconsin Glacier National Park helped to create a space for future generations to explore and define the meaning of that reaction. ▨

Notes

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13. Raymond Zillmer to Julius P. Heil, April 30, 1942. Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.
14. Raymond Zillmer to *Milwaukee Journal*, March 18, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.
15. Raymond Zillmer to Guido Rahr, January 23, 1958, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

Jim Staudacher

Backpackers Lucas (left) and Rose Marian Staudacher on the Scuppernong section of Ice Age Trail near Eagle (1979)

16. Raymond Zillmer to Stanton W. Mead, July 8, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

17. Raymond Zillmer to Fred F. Anderson, December 18, 1958, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

18. Jerome Roltgen to Raymond Zillmer, January 9, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

19. Raymond Zillmer to Stanton W. Mead, June 26, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

20. Stanton W. Mead to Raymond Zillmer, July 1, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

21. Wisconsin Department of Research Development, "Report on Tourism in Wisconsin," (1960), Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

22. Stanton W. Mead to Raymond Zillmer, July 1, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

23. Raymond Zillmer to O. J. Falge, September 11, 1958, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

24. Raymond Zillmer, Letter to the Editor, *Milwaukee Journal*, September 11, 1958.

25. Raymond Zillmer to Walter E. Scott, January 29, 1959, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers. The Conservation Department was the predecessor of today's Department of Natural Resources.

26. Leo Diederich quoted in *Antigo Daily Journal*, August 13, 1958.

27. George F. Blackburn to Raymond Zillmer, August 11, 1960, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

28. Henry Reuss, "Let's Have a Moraine National Park in Wisconsin," Speech in the House of Representatives, August 5, 1958, *Congressional Record*, 85th Congress, 2nd session. Reuss worked with Zillmer to develop this proposal, and they argued that "Wisconsin is 1 in 4 states in the Union which has no national park, yet Wisconsin offers more natural advantages for recreation than most other States."

29. Raymond Zillmer to *Milwaukee Journal*, November 29, 1960, Raymond T. Zillmer Papers.

30. Andrew Hanson, interview, February 23, 2006; Tim Malzhan, interview, March 2, 2006.

31. Henry Reuss, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, March 8, 1959.

32. Henry Reuss, *On the Trail of the Ice Age: A Hiker's and Biker's Guide to Wisconsin's Ice Age National Scientific Reserve and Trail* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1976), 15.

33. Gaylord Nelson, interview by Edmund Garvey, David Sherman, and Ronald Tipman, December 12, 1983. Quoted in Charles H. W. Foster, *The Appalachian National Scenic Trail: A Time to be Bold* (Harpers Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1987), 15.

34. Tom Gilbert, Superintendent, Ice Age National Scenic Trail, National Park Service, interview, February 28, 2006. For a more thorough discussion of these complex arrangements, see Sally Fairfax, "Federal-state cooperation in outdoor recreation policy formation: The case of the Appalachian Trail," PhD thesis, Duke University, 1973.

35. Nathaniel P. Reed, "Why Watt Must Go," *Not Man Apart* 11 (1981), 10, as cited in Roderick F. Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 336.

36. Established in 1964, the LWCF began as a means to protect land for recreation, open space, and wildlife habitat. Information in this paragraph came from an interview with Tom Gilbert, Superintendent, Ice Age National Scenic Trail, National Park Service, February 28, 2006.

37. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (1949; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 173.

About the Author

Sarah Mittlefehldt is a PhD student in forestry and environmental studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She received her bachelor's degree from Carleton College and her master's degree from Harvard University. She has enjoyed volunteering on Ice Age Trail projects but is now living in Virginia with her husband John. She is currently working on her dissertation which explores the social and environmental history of the Appalachian Trail.

Ice Age Summer

My 1,000 Mile Hike on the Ice Age Trail

by James Staudacher

I got the idea to backpack the Ice Age Trail during the late summer of 1978. Curiosity about the geology of the Niagara Escarpment led me to read about the last Ice Age, and I discovered that its effects were most pronounced in Wisconsin. I read about Raymond Zillmer, originator of the dream of Ice Age preservation, and learned of Wisconsin Congressman Henry Reuss's effort to preserve unique Ice Age features. I found a soft-cover book by Reuss, *On the Trail of the Ice Age*, in the Milwaukee Public Museum bookshop, which would become my bible on the trail.

I became enamored of the challenge of long distance hiking and contacted Henry Reuss's congressional office in Milwaukee to outline a plan to become the first person to walk the Ice Age Trail. I enthusiastically summarized a scheme to backpack the entire trail route—defined and undefined—over land that included a hiking trail and on-road biking trail. I would walk alone, sleep under the stars, explore and map uncharted territory; no doubt crossing the paths of ancient explorers and voyageurs at every turn, promoting the Ice Age park and trail concept across Wisconsin. Reuss's congressional assistant Sara Sykes and I worked out the practical details, including a route timeline and a schedule of general delivery mail supply drops that I would pick up in towns along the way.

The preceding winter of 1978–1979 was brutal. Huge blizzards came week after week and never seemed to let up so when the snow continued into April I got worried. I had planned to embark on a walking journey in mid-May that, as far as I could tell, no one had ever accomplished before. I was not sure how many miles I'd travel, or how long it would take. I thought it prudent to start as soon as spring arrived, but I was not confident the winter's record snowfall would be melted by then. Spring eventually arrived and on a crystal clear, warm and sunny day in May 1979, near Sturgeon Bay in northeastern Wisconsin, I shouldered my backpack and became the Ice Age Man.

That summer I walked more than 1,000 miles of overland hiking trails and back roads, following the interlobate and terminal moraines. I traversed forests and prairie, oak savanna and north woods. Along the trail I encountered many people who made their living out-of-doors immersed in the weather and in the ice-sculpted terrain of Wisconsin. The people I met lived close to the land and close to the rhythms of nature—they knew the secrets of the essence of life in Wisconsin's glacial landscape. I met farmers, laborers, newspapermen, teachers, truck drivers, philosophers, environmentalists, fishermen, and cops; all were kind and generous people who were not affluent by most standards, but were prosperous in the richness of their lives. At the same time, they were not without their challenges and day-to-day tribulations. I saw first-hand the scourges of alcoholism, mental illness, and domestic violence.

As I traveled, I also faced many challenges of my own. Backpacking teaches the traveler to focus on the immediate and real as it strips away pretense and instills humility. I was quickly reminded that spring returns life to its essential elements. The hoards of mosquitoes and black flies all along the route as well as a lack of fresh water were small annoyances I dealt with every day. Then one day there was a bigger challenge. In a swamp in the backwoods of Marathon County's Leathercamp Forest northwest of Shantytown, I was attacked by a pack of wild dogs. I survived by killing one of them with a piece of firewood. That gruesome experience haunts my dreams to this day.

The tale of my 1,000-mile backpack of the Ice Age Trail is one of adventure, hard work and success through perseverance. Not just for me, the vagabond, but also for the inhabitants of Wisconsin, the good people of strong character who were fortunate to live in a rich glacial landscape three quarters of the way through the twentieth century. Preserving their legacy for the future is what my hike and the Ice Age Trail and Reserve Units are all about.

James J. Staudacher became the first person to walk the Ice Age Trail at age 20 in 1979. He is currently a writer/photographer and a full time police detective in Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin.

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Jim Staudacher hiked the entire length of the Ice Age Trail during the summer of 1979 when he was twenty.