

# An Ice Age Park and Trail in Wisconsin



***"We spend millions to go fast;  
let's spend a little to go slow."***

Reprinted from LET'S SEE MAGAZINE, April, 1961,  
by the ICE AGE PARK and TRAIL FOUNDATION.  
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## A NATIONAL PARK IN WISCONSIN

30,000 years ago, the great glacier  
came creeping out of the North  
to cover Wisconsin with ice a mile thick.  
Now there are plans to create  
an Ice Age National Park  
in the scenic lands it left behind.





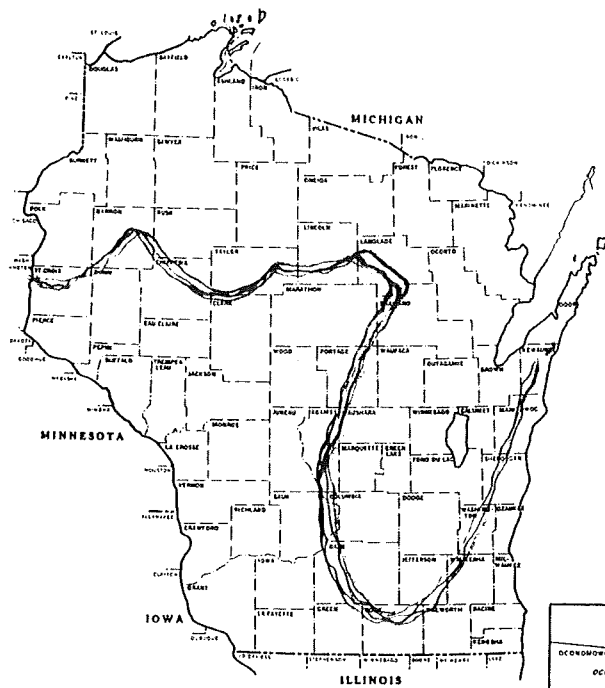
*The battlements of Holy Hill monastery loom over the Kettle Moraine.*

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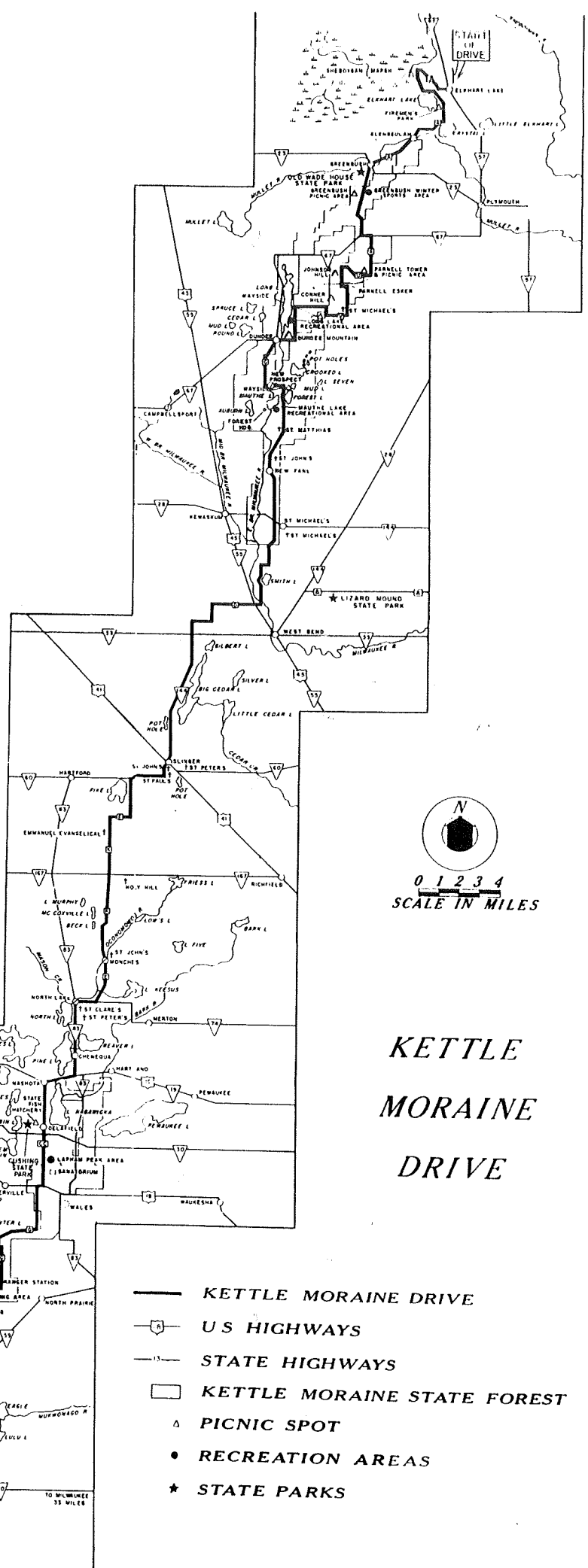
# KETTLE MORaine DRIVE

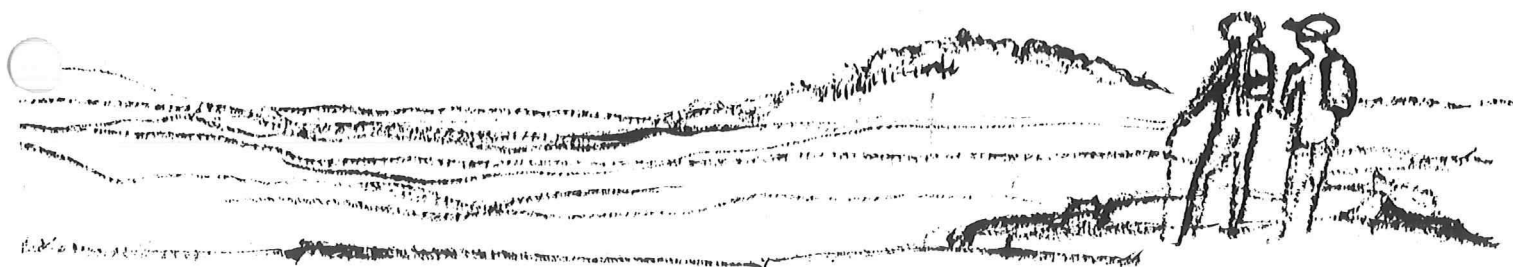
You can follow the acorn-shaped road markers for 120 miles on scenic Kettle Moraine Drive covering the area which would be the nucleus of the proposed Ice Age National Park.

THE last of the great glaciers to hone the soft hills, green valleys and sky-dyed lakes of the land that is now Wisconsin came creeping out of the north some 30,000 years ago, spreading a mantle of ice a mile or more thick over four-fifths of the state. This gelid wasteland—45,000 square miles of white desolation—was more abandoned than Antarctica, much more forsaken than Thule; the only sounds the grumbling of the imperceptibly moving ice mass and the occasional booming of huge frozen chunks cracking or crumbling from the giant glacier, its advance edge dirtied and rubbled like the smudged surface of a



The proposed Ice Age Trail would meander for some 500 miles across the state, from the Kettle Moraine to the Mississippi.





snow pile that has lain all winter along a Milwaukee street. It was a world that was cold and dead—as barren as the craters of the moon, yet here was the cradle of the verdant rugged hills, the forest wilds, and myriad waters of a 20th century vacation land. It was the source, too, of what may some day become the first national park in the Middle West.

Advancing in five tongue-shaped lobes, the Wisconsin Glacier—as it is now known—gouged out the basins of Lake Michigan and great-deeped Lake Superior. Another lobe flowed down to form Green Bay, Lake Winnebago and the Horicon Marsh. Between the Superior and Green Bay lobes, the Chippewa lobe eventually left its own monuments, the Chippewa and Black rivers. When the world warmed up and the monstrous ice withdrew—as recently as five thousand years ago—it left its imprint on a line wriggling for some 500 miles across the state, a trail which today shows more clearly than any other region in the nation direct evidence of the glacier's farthest advance.

Boulders borne along in the glacial flow left scratches on the rocks at Devil's Lake and the lake itself was formed when the glacier's debris dammed the ends of an ancient valley. As the ice field began to melt, running streams on the surface often bore through to create eventually the chocolate drop *kames*—Dundee Mountain, for instance, in the northern purchase unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. Sub-surface rivers tunneling through the ice formed narrow, winding *eskers* snaking across the countryside (such as Parnell Esker just 50 miles north of City Hall). Rocks and gravel accumulating in the sticky clays of the glacier floor formed *drumlins*, the streamlined hillocks so much in evidence from highways 19 and 30 in Dodge and Jefferson counties. The land was pocked with *kettles*, pot holes routed by the melting of huge blocks of ice that settled in the frozen ground after falling from the retreating mass. And everywhere in its wake the glacier left *moraines*, the undulating gravelly hills, now tree-cloaked by time, which were born of the debris deposited either at the sides or the front of the glacier's advance.

Ruins of farm houses and abandoned stone fences scattered throughout the Kettle Moraine country memorialize generations of farmers who broke their plows in the rocky soil of the moraine hills. Much more successful from a strictly commercial viewpoint have been the sand and gravel pit operators who bite into the kames and eskers with the glee of a pack of hungry mice in a cheese factory—and with uglier results. But the real, and most lasting value of the glacier-marked areas has been that of a natural wilderness set aside for the outdoor recreation of the growing population of the state—a fact noted 25 years ago by the State of Wisconsin when, as the result of an extensive geological and economic survey, it marked the Kettle Moraine for gradual development as a state forest park.

Each year, millions of Wisconsin people and visitors from

outside the State prove the recreational value of these areas. Annually, the three major state parks in the glacier-marked regions—Kettle Moraine, Devil's Lake and Interstate on the St. Croix—together draw more visitors than any of the National Parks except Great Smoky Mountains. Indeed, they yearly count more visitors than ten of all the 29 national parks combined. The Kettle Moraine State Forest alone has more visitors annually than at least 16 of the national parks, and only Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah national parks, both located on the populous east coast, get more usage than Devil's Lake State Park.

Among all the thousands who have hiked the moraines, there was perhaps no one who loved them more than the late Raymond T. Zillmer, a feisty Milwaukee attorney who boasted that he had walked over every square foot of the Kettle Moraine, both in winter and summer, once discovering there the second largest white birch ever recorded in the United States. Zillmer's one dream was to see a 500-mile hiking trail linking together the terminal moraines of the Wisconsin Glacier into one continuous national recreational area—the Ice Age National Park.

Ray Zillmer was the kind of man who, with nothing more than the pack on his back, would get off the Canadian Pacific railroad at some remote point in the wilds of British Columbia, hike and camp for weeks in an area where few white men had ever explored before, and then emerge from the forest somewhere down the line to keep a rendezvous with another train. He climbed mountains, often contributed to the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, adding so much new information about the Cariboo Range that a 9600-foot peak is now called Mt. Zillmer. He was the kind of man who liked to share the outdoors with others, going off on long camping trips with either his son or his daughter, or taking along anyone who happened to drop by his Wauwatosa home before the almost weekly hiking trips he took in the Kettle Moraine. In his 70's he could still set a pace which made underconditioned younger men gasp. He was an ardent conservationist, honored as such by the National Campers and Hikers Association; hated billboards (all his letters bore stickers reading: "I favor products not advertised along the road.") and thought it was the obligation of this generation to preserve as many untrammelled areas of natural beauty as possible for the next.

Zillmer saw in the Kettle Moraine State Forest the nucleus for a national park which would be used "by millions more people than use the more remote national parks." He pictured a 120-mile marked trail leading down the Kettle Moraine and then extending 400 miles farther across the state marking the terminal moraines of the Wisconsin Glacier. It would be similar to the Appalachian Trail on the east coast or the John Muir Trail in the Sierras with shelters spaced every ten miles or so for overnight camping. In places it would be less than a mile wide. At other spots the

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park confines would broaden to encompass an extensive recreation area or important geological monuments.

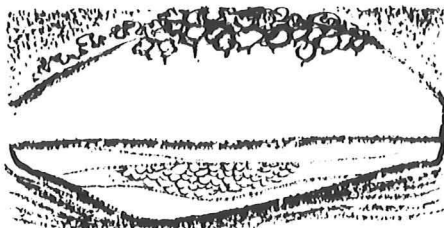
Since 1936, the State has been gradually developing the Kettle Moraine, in two widely separated sections, out of southeastern Wisconsin's share of the forestry mill tax. The trouble was, and is—according to most conservationists—the state purchases were not going along at a fast enough clip. While the yearly amount allotted for new land remained almost constant, the price per acre in the Kettle Moraine was going up. It would be years, if ever, before the entire Kettle Moraine State Forest project running from Chilton to Eagle to Whitewater was completed—and all the while the eager shovels were gouging the eskers for gravel, subdivisions were flattening the moraines into treeless monotony, and there was increasing danger of rampant suburbia with all its bulldozers, road signs, neon jungles, and other attendant horrors ruining much of the privately held moraine land forever.



"After 20 years of active planning," Zillmer wrote a couple of years ago, "the Kettle Moraine Park is far from complete. One half of the land suggested in the survey of 1936 for incorporation in the Kettle Moraine Forest has been completely ignored by the Conservation Department. Nobody in the state government has shown sufficient foresight to realize the potential of this recreational forest to the state and nation. The state has spent only the minimum amount which it is *required* by statute to spend to develop the Kettle Moraine Park. It has used *none* of the other discretionary funds available to it. At the rate it is now going on, it will take 50 more years to complete the Kettle Moraine project as contemplated by the State Survey of 1936. We must therefore turn to the Federal Government."

Zillmer brought together other hikers and conservation-minded citizens to form the Ice Age National Park and Trail Foundation, which has raised money to promote the national park idea, purchased key lands to turn over eventually to the State, built two sturdy shelters, and cleared, mapped and marked a few pioneer trails. A citizens commit-

tee was formed which included among its members two of the Kettle Moraine's best known residents, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne of the Broadway stage and Genesee Depot, Wisconsin. Bills proposing the national park were introduced into Congress by Senator Alexander Wiley and Representative Henry Reuss, an active member of the foundation. The Wisconsin Legislature passed a unanimous resolution, a monumental achievement in itself, calling on Congress to take steps to establish the park and promising the active cooperation of the State with national authorities.



In 1958, the National Park Service made a preliminary survey of the proposed park. While turning down the original park idea of a 500-mile strip as too difficult to administer and protect, it did see merit in including the three principal areas—the Kettle Moraine, Devil's Lake, and Interstate—in the national park system. Thanks to a \$10,000 contribution from an anonymous Wisconsin conservationist, the N.P.S. now has funds available for a more complete survey this Spring. Before that, however, state and federal authorities are slated to sit down to discuss problems of administration, ownership, and development which must be worked out before the Ice Age National Park can move a step closer to becoming a stand-out point of interest on AAA tourist maps.

What is now proposed by the backers of the national park is that the federal government provide administration and interpretive services for the three major areas, an action which would save the State some \$250,000 to \$300,000 it now spends yearly. With this money, conservationists urge that the State buy additional lands to complete the Kettle Moraine State Forest plan recommended in 1936.

"We really don't care too much *how* the job gets done," says John C. Mallien, the Milwaukee attorney who succeeded Zillmer as president of the Foundation. "We can see a final cooperative effort between federal, state, county and even private segments. A national park status would protect the major areas from additional encroachments, even from some State agencies that might want to put them to other than recreational uses. But the completed trail could wind across all types of lands, even using easements across private property much the same way the Appalachian Trail does."

For those who would like a good idea of what an Ice Age Park and the proposed trail would be like, a good place to start is in the Kettle Moraine, which lies within an hour's drive of two-thirds of the population of the state. For a real study in contrasts, you can start from a point in downtown Milwaukee where the waters of the Milwaukee River are so drear and dark you would hesitate to fill your car radiator with them; you can drive north for a couple of hours and come to narrow headwaters of the same stream so clear, so fresh and pure that you can bend down and safely slake your hiker's thirst. The spring-fed pools nearby are clustered with water cress, even in February of this non-glacial winter of 1960-61, and the Spring frogs have soft, white underbellies and kick their long legs like kids at the YMCA just learning to swim.

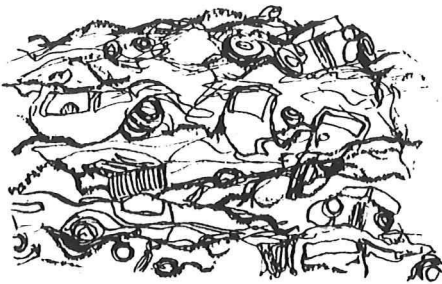


There are two main ways of seeing the Kettle Moraine. One way is to drive, following the acorn-shaped signs placed by the State along the roads and highways to mark the 120-mile Kettle Moraine Drive from Elkhart Lake to Whitewater Lake. If you are merely interested in looking, this is the way. In Spring the drive is fragrant and scented with wildflowers—*hepatica*, *trillium*, marsh marigold—dogwood and occasional apple and wild plum blossoms; in Fall, afire with the blazes of birch, beech, maple and oak.

The more satisfying way is to walk, to feel the roll of the glacier land beneath your feet, travel close enough to the nascent earth to glimpse the tiniest bloom, even get your feet wet in the little streams that cross your path. For the hiker, the Kettle Moraine is a land of surprises: climbing through the thickly wooded hills you suddenly see a secluded cup of a lake; in the midst of a bog, you come across a beech tree with a circumference of nearly seven feet; dense trees give way to a grassy corridor leading to a wide, marshy meadow where cattails sway in the breeze. With a little luck you can walk all day in the Kettle Moraine without seeing a human face, other than the reflection of your own in some quiet, sunlit water.

A third way is to combine the two methods—drive a while, then get out and walk where the going looks particularly interesting.

Whichever way you go, an interesting place to start in the northern purchase unit is the Greenbush or Glenbeulah area. The village of Greenbush, in particular, preserves something of the flavor of a quieter century, and among its simple, dignified structures is the old Wade House, the stage coach inn built in 1851 by Sylvanus Wade. The grounds around the Wade House, now open to the public, would probably make a good site for a Wisconsin pioneer park or "outdoor museum." Here, as proposed by Milwaukee architect Richard W. E. Perrin, could be gathered samples of early Wisconsin architecture—a Russian church, a German *Fachwerkbauhaus*, a Norwegian *stua*—representing probably more different European cultures than can be found in the buildings of any other state.



But it should be noted that all is not charm in Greenbush. In the midst of the reminders of the simple good taste of another generation a junky automobile graveyard of a few months' vintage stands out like a juke box in the White House, and nearby hills are clawed raw by grasping machines of the gravel diggers.

There is a public picnic grounds in the Greenbush area, and two ski runs, one for the men and one for the boys. The country is wild and rugged; many of the roads are still unpaved, and some of them should always remain that way, national park or no. There's still something about a dirt road that says take it easy, relax, what's your hurry? Along the way are geological markers placed by the state forest people pointing out a kettle here, an esker, a moulin kame, one explaining the history of moraines. They make interesting reading, much more so than the signs you usually find shouting at you as you drive through non-government land—and what's more they don't ask you to buy a thing.

For a hawk's-eye view of the northern purchase unit, climb the narrow wooden steps of Parnell Tower off highway U and from the top observation platform look out over the pointed, Teton-like kames to the west, or the tree-cloaked drumlins, eskers, and other interlobate moraine hills. If it's a clear day, you may see Sheboygan off to the northeast. There's Lake Michigan, or is it only a continuation of the sky?

You pass the white-steepled churches—St. Matthias' where tombstones in the next-door church yard read like a page from the Munich telephone directory; St. Michael's where the Donnegan's and O'Brien's await the final trumpet, to be sounded perhaps not by Gabriel, but Patrick. Farther south, the names are Welsh—the people have come from afar to live and die in the Kettle Moraine.

There are the lakes: Mauthe, Butler, Long, Auburn, Big Cedar, Spring, and dozens of others, some without names. In summer, Mauthe Lake is thronged with fishermen, campers, swimmers, picnickers—over 200,000 of them in a single year; in winter, it is deserted except for the ice fishermen. For real winter thrills, there's ice boating—especially on Pewaukee, Oconomowoc and Pine Lakes.

The battlements of Holy Hill monastery loom before you as you continue southward—a spiritual fortress right out of the Middle Ages. In the southern purchase unit, Lapham Peak looms a surprising 1233 feet above sea level, a 652 foot vertical rise over Milwaukee. From the observation tower here you can look out upon blue rimmed hills and smoky lakes—the land of the glacier remains much as it was when first viewed by the Indians.

From the Kettle Moraine, the proposed Ice Age Trail would wind from Whitewater Lake westward through Walworth and Rock counties, following a hardwood covered moraine to a point near Janesville, cross the Rock River, bend north to Brooklyn, eventually hitting the Wisconsin River at Prairie du Sac, then up the Wisconsin to the ferry at Merrimac and northwestward into the Sauk County area dominated by Devil's Lake.

Here would be located the second of the three park areas proposed for National Park Service administration. Aside from its glacial lore, Devil's Lake is noted as the foremost center of rock climbing in the Middle West. Visited by 1.5 million persons a year, it is also a center for the less risky pursuits of camping, boating, swimming and fishing. The Baraboo Hills provide trails abounding with both pre-glacial and glacial lore; and nearby scenic attractions include Aldo Leopold's conservation hide-away on the Wisconsin River, the Wisconsin River Dells, Lapham Woods, the Rocky Arbor Roadside Park, Durward's Glen and Parfrey's Glen, veritable botanist's bonanzas.

From Devil's Lake the Ice Age Trail would meander through the area once covered by Wisconsin's largest lake—extinct Glacial Lake Wisconsin—from the Wisconsin River below the lower Dells through Columbia and Adams counties on to the Portage County line.

At this point, a pilgrimage is in order to Montello, the site of the boyhood home of naturalist John Muir, who more than anyone else was responsible for the designation of America's first national park, Yellowstone, in 1872. ("Government protection should be thrown around every wild grove and forest on the mountains," Muir once wrote, "as it is around every private orchard and the trees in public parks. To say nothing of their value as fountains of timber, they are worth infinitely more than all the gardens and parks of towns.")

The trail would skirt the Menominee Indian Reservation, run through the Chequamegon National Forest, and eventually terminate in the St. Croix River area now embraced by Interstate State Park, the third of the recreation areas in which the National Park Service has evidenced interest. Here the foaming St. Croix, plunging between banks of wooded wilderness and craggy rock faces, forms a raging complement to the more static beauty of the Kettle Moraine wilderness on the eastern end of the glacier trail.

It would be premature to name a definite day and year when the first hiker will be able to traipse the moraines all the way from Greenbush, say, to the St. Croix, or when the green uniforms of the National Park Service will greet visitors to an Ice Age National Park in Wisconsin, but it is not premature to think of the day when the future is on our doorstep.

The new Secretary of the Interior said the other day that "the necessity to meet the outdoor needs of our people now and in the future will in all likelihood be the sharpest and most consistent pressure on our land, water and forests in the years ahead." Ray Zillmer saw the pressure in terms of his own locality. "It is important that we survey Wisconsin at this time," he wrote not long before his death last December, "to determine whether there will be sufficient outdoor recreational areas available to the increased population, not only of Wisconsin, but of the entire general area, so that our children and their children may have the outdoor opportunities we have had."

Early in June Justice William O. Douglas of the United States Supreme Court is expected to trade his black robes for the more rugged togs of the outdoors man that he is, to lead a hike through the Kettle Moraine that will help to publicize Ray Zillmer's fondest dream—the Ice Age National Park and the Ice Age Trail. Those who accompany the high court justice on the hike might well be recalling one of Zillmer's favorite slogans—"We spend millions to go fast; let's spend a little to go slow."

# ICE AGE PARK AND TRAIL FOUNDATION OF WISCONSIN, INCORPORATED

(A Non-Profit Organization)

## Purpose of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation of Wisconsin:

1. The establishment, development and maintenance of public lands, forests, parks and recreational areas in and about the areas of the moraines and other glacial formations in Wisconsin;
2. The establishment, development and maintenance for public use in and about such areas, of waysides and non-speed parkways and of long connected trails with shelters, in the nature of the Appalachian and John Muir Trails;
3. The scientific exploration and study of such areas including the flora and fauna thereof as well as the geology thereof;
4. The education of the people, especially the young people, in the beauties and wonders of nature and its spiritual and health-giving values so that they will make greater use of such areas, as well as other outdoor areas, with a view to developing men and women who are strong and healthy, both physically and mentally.

## Contributions to the Foundation

(including amounts paid for membership) are deductible for federal and state income tax purposes. The Foundation invites everyone to participate and assist the above program by becoming a member on any of the following terms:

**Basic Membership** — \$1.00.

**Active Membership** — \$5.00.

**Life Membership** — \$100.00.

**Sustaining Membership** — \$100.00 or more given annually.

**Memorial or Recognition Membership** — \$1,000.00 or more.

Gifts may be made in memory of someone or in recognition of work done in Conservation or other public service.

## What We Do and How We Spend Our Money:

*All officers and directors of the Foundation donate their time and services to the work of the Foundation. The Foundation has no salaried employees and no paid workers. The Foundation's work to date has included the work listed below and contributions and membership dues are used only:*

1. To help acquire land for an Ice-Age Park and necessary easements for the establishment of trails.
2. For materials for the erection of shelters, the cutting and marking of trails, and the improvement of designated areas.
3. To prepare and distribute trail maps, educational material and recreational information about the various areas within the glacial formations.
4. To promote the above purposes of the Foundation.

In connection with the foregoing, the Foundation will carry out the wishes of donors of land and money or will supervise gifts to assure that the donor's wishes are carried out. The Foundation will also assist those wishing to make direct gifts to the governmental units involved.

Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation of Wisconsin, Inc.  
411 East Mason Street, Suite 600  
Milwaukee 2, Wisconsin

We spend a lot to go faster — let us spend a little to go slower.

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## Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation of Wisconsin, Inc. 411 East Mason Street, Suite 600, Milwaukee 2, Wisconsin

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