

Project Factsheet for: Neal Smith Trail, Saylorville Lake, Iowa

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Project Location Information

Location:Saylorville Lake, Iowa
River Basin(s): Des Moines / Skunk
State(s): IA
Congressional District(s): IA-3

Status

Project in operation.

Description

The current Neal Smith Trail was constructed in the early to mid 1980's using design criteria in effect at that time. As a result most of the trail was constructed at an 8 foot width and does not meet current design criteria for trails with regards to width, grade, and alignment. The Corps-managed section of the Neal Smith Trail has seen an exponential growth in use with over 6,516,608 million visitor hours and over 700,000 visitors recorded over the past 5 years. Trail use and visitation increased 21.7% from 1997-2000, and increased 26.8% during the 2000-2004 time frame. 2004 visitation on the Corps-managed section of the trail exceeded 100,000 visitors for the first time in the history of the trail. The trail surface for most of the thirteen miles is approximately twenty years old and exhibits considerable cracking, settling, erosion, and abrasion and creates hazardous conditions for trail users. Current O&M funding precludes any major rehabilitation of the Neal Smith Trail, with Corps efforts limited to patching and minimal repairs as conditions warrant. Resurfacing and widening the trail to twelve feet will improve recreational use and reduce user conflicts between bicyclists, joggers, in-line skaters, and walkers of all ages. Widening the trail to 12 feet will also allow the use of conventional paving equipment whereas the current width requires special equipment not commonly available.

Initial construction of the Saylorville-Des Moines River Trail began in the early 1980's using Operation and Maintenance (O&M) funds appropriated for the Saylorville Lake Project. Supplemental appropriations of approximately \$3.5 million dollars in Construction, General (CG) funds sponsored by Congressman Neal Smith in 1986 provided the funds necessary to complete the construction of the trail from Cherry Glen Recreation Area to the Big Creek State Park entrance. The Saylorville-Des Moines River Trail was renamed the Neal Smith Trail in the early 1990's and was awarded American Discovery Trail (ADT) status in the early 1990's as well. The Neal Smith Trail has served as the "backbone" for the planning and development of multiple connecting trail systems in central Iowa. Two trails developed by the City of Des Moines already connect to the Neal Smith Trail, with eight additional connecting trails either under development or proposed by other agencies. The Neal Smith Trail sits at the hub of "vision corridors" in the State of Iowa based on the IDOT Statewide Trails Vision Map. The Des Moines Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMMPO), composed of county and municipal agencies and the Iowa DOT, are planning and promoting the development of this network of trails that eventually will add users of all ages and activities to the Neal Smith Trail. Current trail deficiencies create user conflicts and hazardous conditions that result in 5 to 8 significant injury accidents each summer season, with numerous minor accidents that often go unreported.

Summarized Financial Data

Federal Allocations through FY 2004	\$0
Scheduled Federal Allocation for FY 2005	\$0
Scheduled Federal Allocation for FY 2006 (SAFETEA-LU funding)	\$3,672,000

Major Work Item (Next Fiscal Year)

FY 2006: Rehabilitate Neal Smith Trail (mill existing asphalt, widen, and resurface 13.2 miles of Corps-managed trail, in CY 2006 dollars): \$3,672,000

Implement ALL recommendations of Neal Smith Trail Deficiency Report And Master Plan (in CY 2000 dollars): \$11,000,000

Authority

SI - Special Interest --

Additional Information

Congressman Leonard Boswell secured \$3.672 million in funding under the 2005 SAFETEA-LU transportation bill to rehabilitate the trail surface and correct three major safety deficiencies on the Corps-managed section (13.5 miles) of the Neal Smith Trail. At present this funding requires a 20% local cost share partner unless language is changed to make the project 100% Federally funded. Operations Manager Steve Fairbanks was notified by Senator Grassley's office on 12/23/06 that there was no Congressional support to change the language in SAFETEA-LU. Presently no funds are available under SAFETEA-LU to perform the work. Project staff are exploring alternatives to accomplish the rehabilitation project. The Corps has completed the Environmental Assessment with FONSI.

In August, Acting Operations Project Manager Jeff Rose, received word that the U.S. House approved legislation (HR 3248--the highway bill technical corrections bill) submitted by Congressman Leonard Boswell, that will allow for 100% federal cost share for the Neal Smith Trail reconstruction. The bill has not cleared the Senate.

Project Manager Information

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