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Organization: North Country National Scenic Trail, NPS

Title: Superintendent

Comments: Thank you very much for your continued communication and collaboration with the North Country National Scenic Trail, North Country Trail Association, and Buckeye Trail Association as you work to develop the Forest Plan. Thank you also for your identification of the North Country National Scenic Trail as a critical resource of national significance in your draft Assessment, and for acknowledging the memorandum of understanding that is in place between the US Forest Service Eastern Region, National Park Service Midwest Region, and the North Country Trail Association that serves to identify our agreed upon roles and responsibilities for protecting, improving, and managing the Trail.

As the Forest proceeds beyond the Assessment and into the Plan Development stage, please take close note of the National Park Service's expectation that the Plan will be consistent with the provisions of our memorandum of understanding, to include a designated and defined management area for the North Country National Scenic Trail, which was not mentioned in the Assessment. We appreciate the initial pledge of support we received from the previous Forest Supervisor regarding the management area and for the opportunities we have been given to work with the planning team to help the Forest identify where and how implement this new, but critically important, strategy for protecting and enhancing the Congressionally-designated national scenic trail.

The Forest may expect our continued assistance and support in achieving the objectives described in our memorandum of understanding and the 2012 Planning Rule as it applies to designated areas and national scenic trails; as well as our full cooperation in the long-term management and protection of the Trail on the Wayne National Forest.