



**Memorandum**

Wisconsin Department  
of Transportation  
Division of Transportation System Development  
Jerald Mentzel, Region Director  
NW Region - Superior  
1701 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Superior, Wisconsin 54880

Date: April 13, 2020  
To: Pete Eakman, FHWA  
Aaron Gustafson, WisDOT Regional Environmental Coordinator  
From: Beth Cunningham, PE - WisDOT Project Manager  
Subject: **PROJECT ID: 1197-00-00**  
**USH 53, Spooner - Minong**  
**Trego Interchange**  
**Washburn County**

**INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT VALIDITY**

State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
**Andrew Stensland** Digitally signed by Andrew Stensland  
Date: 2020.04.30 15:48:27 -05'00'

Regional Approving Authority (Name, Title) [Sign and Print] Date

**Scott J.** Digitally signed by Scott J. Lawry  
Date: 2020.05.01 08:41:40 -05'00'

Bureau of Technical Services Director Date

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
Wisconsin Division

*Peter R. Eakman* Digitally signed by PETER R EAKMAN  
Date: 2020.05.06 06:34:30 -05'00'

FHWA Approving Authority (Name, Title) [Sign and print] Date

## 1. PURPOSE

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This memo has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the following documents as applicable: Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act 40 CFR 1500-1508; Federal Highway Administration Environmental Impact and Related Procedures 23 CFR 771.129(c); Federal Highway Administration Technical Advisory T 6640.8A; the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act; Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter Trans 400 and the policy of WisDOT to evaluate the status of a project's environmental documentation prior to authorization of each major project development step.

Elements considered in this memo are:

- Changes in project design
- Changes to project impacts

Consultation between WisDOT and FHWA occurred on December 5, 2019 to determine the applicability of the documentation due to the project design and impact changes. WisDOT and FHWA jointly determined this memo to file was warranted.

## 2. ORIGINAL ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

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The project Environmental Assessment (EA) was signed on June 26, 2018.

The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on November 14, 2018. (See Exhibit A)

The project Termini of the original EA encompasses the Trego Interchange preferred alternative, including the areas that are further described. (See Exhibit B).

## 3. PROPOSED ACTIONS

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### US 53/Potato Creek Crossing:

Within the "Description of Proposed Action", page 23 of 112 in the signed EA, and supported in the FONSI, the existing Potato Creek box culvert under US 53 was described as a "reconstruction." After further evaluation this existing box culvert will be replaced with two bridge structures on US 53.

When developing the original environmental documentation, the proposed structure type was uncertain. Additional design was required to determine short and long term impacts due to:

Constructability concerns:

- Depth of Culvert (Approximately 35' from road profile to culvert invert).
- Maintaining safe US 53 passage during construction.
- Removal of Existing Culvert while maintain flow

Environmental Concerns:

- Bank Full Width and sizing an appropriate box
- Long range health and mobility of mussel species of special concern
- Short term water quality concerns of both Potato Creek and Namekagon River (An Outstanding Resource Water) during construction

Maintenance Concerns:

- Life Cycle Maintenance Costs

Full evaluation of the concerns led WisDOT to pursue the design and construction of the two bridge structures on US 53, balancing short term constructability and maintenance concerns with long term environmental benefits.

US 63 at Lakeside Road Fencing:

Within Basic Sheet 5, page 40 of 112 and Factor Sheet B-8, page 72 of 112 in the signed EA, and supported in the FONSI, pedestrians crossing US 63 near the intersection of Lakeside Road would not be prohibited after construction completion. Pedestrians currently cross US 63 to traverse between the National Park Service (NPS) Visitor Center and the Namekagon River/parking lot area north of the highway. There is not a designated crosswalk on US 63 in this location, however this pedestrian movement has been documented by NPS from the onset of the project coordination.

After further evaluation and careful consideration of pedestrian safety and liability concerns WisDOT is proposing installation of a fence between USH 63 and the Namekagon River.

## 4. PURPOSE AND NEED

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The purpose and need of the project has not changed since the signing of the EA and FONSI. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to address safety at the US 53 intersection with US 63 and County E while addressing roadway and structure deficiencies, maintaining recreational opportunities in the Trego area, and improving deteriorating traffic operation conditions. The primary need of the Proposed Action is safety. The secondary project needs which support the project purpose include capacity during peak times, roadway and structural deficiencies, social demands, and system linkage and route importance.

US 53/Potato Creek Crossing:

The action resulting in this documentation meets this purpose and need by adequately addressing documented structural deficiency of the Potato Creek box culvert structure.

US 63 at Lakeside Road Fencing:

The action resulting in this documentation meets this purpose and need by adequately addressing documented pedestrian safety concerns at the intersection of Lakeside Road and US 63.

## 5. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

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The environmental resources indicated below are relevant to the proposed actions. The impacts to the resources are not as a result of policy, law, or regulation changes, but as a direct result of the design change.

### US 53/Potato Creek Crossing:

#### Wetland Evaluation

The construction of the two bridges carrying USH 53 over the Potato Creek will impact wetlands. The signed EA indicated a wetland loss of 0.22 acres due to the reconstruction of the box culvert. The construction of the bridge structures will result in a loss of 0.061 acres. (See Exhibit C).

There is no change to the original EA Factor Sheet C-1 (Wetlands Evaluation) beyond the area of anticipated wetland loss.

#### Rivers, Streams, and Floodplains Evaluation

The new bridges at USH 53 over Potato Creek will not increase the backwater of Potato Creek. The structure is designed to pass the 100-year design event.

#### Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) Evaluation

Coordination with the DNR has indicated the Potato Creek is classified as a warmwater stream containing a population of both fish species and mussel species, including mussels classified by the state as being of special concern. WisDOT has determined that the existing box culvert structure is undersized, resulting in flows that exceed that of the velocities in the normal reach of the stream.

The replacement of the box culvert with bridge structures will allow for Potato Creek to naturally flow under USH 53, resulting in a natural environment for aquatic organism passage and normalized velocities.

The mussels in the project area will be relocated prior to construction, resulting in a “No Effect” determination.

### US 63 at Lakeside Road Fencing:

#### Preliminary Design:

Initial comments from the NPS (EA Attachment 25) indicated that pedestrians cross US 63 in the area of Lakeside road to traverse between the NPS Visitor Center and the Namekagon River. NPS further indicated WisDOT should develop design options to a safe crossing of US 63 in this area. Ongoing coordination with the NPS during preliminary design further indicated pedestrian safety is still of concern.

During preliminary design, WisDOT evaluated potential options for a marked crosswalk, US 63 raised median options, and an alternative US 63 highway alignment. None of the options evaluated were chosen as preferred due to offsetting consequences regarding additional negative environment impacts and design criteria non-compliance. At the time of the EA approval, WisDOT determined pedestrians would not be encouraged to cross US 63, but would not be prohibited.

#### Final Design:

Coordination during final design has been ongoing with the NPS, DNR and the Town of Trego. The pedestrian safety concerns continue to be brought forward to WisDOT. Ongoing evaluation of the area

does indicate that there are no viable options to safely accommodate pedestrians crossing at this location.

The sight distance on the west side of the Visitor Center is not adequate for safe pedestrian crossing. A right-of-way fence will be installed along US 63 to discourage pedestrians from crossing the high-speed rural highway facility. Eliminating the crossing is the only viable alternative to reduce the long-term safety and liability concerns. WisDOT initiated coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service for comments on the installation.

## 6. COMMENTS AND COORDINATION CONDUCTED

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### US 53/Potato Creek Crossing:

The DNR has provided comment on the decision to construct bridges over a new box culvert. See Exhibit D.

### US 63 at Lakeside Road Fencing:

The DNR (see Exhibit E) and the NPS (see Exhibit F) have offered comments on the decision to construct a fence along the north side of US 63 at Lakeside Road. WisDOT responded to the NPS addressing and clarifying issues related to the fencing (see Exhibit F).

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS

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There are no changes to the original EA Environmental Commitments (Basic Sheet 8) due to the change from a reconstructed box culvert to bridge structures or from the installation of the fencing along US 63 at Lakeside Road.

## 8. LIST OF EXHIBITS

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Exhibit A: Signed Title Page, original FONSI

Exhibit B: Project Overview

Exhibit C: Updated Wetland Impacts at USH 53/Potato Creek crossing

Exhibit D: DNR comments – Potato Creek bridges

Exhibit E: DNR comments – US 63/Lakeside Road Fencing

Exhibit F: NPS comments and WisDOT response – US 63/Lakeside Road Fencing

# ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION OF FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

EXHIBIT A

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)  
 DT2094 1/2016

## BASIC SHEET 1 - PROJECT SUMMARY

Project ID 1197-00-00 (design) 1197-00-20 (real estate) 1197-00-40 (utility) 1197-00-50/51 (railroad) 1197-00-70 (construction)	Project Termini Spooner – Minong	Funding Sources <i>(check all that apply)</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local Estimated Project Cost and Funding Source (state and/or federal). Year of Expenditure (YOE) dollars include delivery cost.  \$20.6M in YOE 2021 dollars (STIP 2018-2021)								
Route Designation (if applicable) US 53 National Highway System (NHS) Route <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Nearest Community Town of Trego	Real Estate Acquisition Portion of Estimated Cost (YOE) \$2.5M in YOE 2018-2021 dollars								
Project Title Trego Interchange	Section / Township / Range Section 2 & 3 / T39N / R12W Section 24 & 35 / T40N / R12W	Utility Relocation Portion of Estimated Cost (YOE) \$0.3M in YOE 2019 dollars								
County Washburn  Bridge Number(s) <i>(if applicable)</i> P-65-0006 (Lakeside Rd); B-65-0055 (WRST); B-65-0056 (US 63); C-65-0015 (US 53); B-65-0057 (West Frontage Rd)	For an ER, indicate the date funding was authorized to begin preliminary engineering. For an EA, indicate the date the Process Initiation Letter was accepted by FHWA.  5/31/2016	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Right of Way Acquisition</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Acres</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Fee</td> <td style="text-align: center;">52</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">TLE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">PLE</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Right of Way Acquisition	Acres	Fee	52	TLE	3	PLE	1
Right of Way Acquisition	Acres									
Fee	52									
TLE	3									
PLE	1									

Functional Classification of Existing Route (FDM 3-5-2)	Urban	Rural
Freeway/Expressway	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Principal Arterial (US 53 and US 63)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Minor Arterial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Major Collector (County E)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Minor Collector		<input type="checkbox"/>
Collector	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local (Local Road Connections)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No Functional Class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WisDOT Project Classification (FDM 3-5-2)	
Resurfacing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pavement Replacement	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reconditioning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expansion	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bridge Rehabilitation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bridge Replacement	<input type="checkbox"/>
"Majors" Project (there are both state and federal majors)	<input type="checkbox"/>
SHRM	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reconstruction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Preventive Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other-Describe:	<input type="checkbox"/>

FHWA Draft Type 2c Categorical Exclusion (CE)/WisDOT Draft Environmental Report (ER). **No significant impacts indicated by initial assessment.**

FHWA/WisDOT Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). **No significant impacts indicated by initial assessment.**

Stephanie Christensen, Env. Project Manager, EMCS, Inc.    6/19/18 (Print – Preparer Name, Title, Company/Organization)    (Date – m/d/yy)	(Signature – Director, Bureau of Technical Services)    6-26-18 (Date – m/d/yy)
(Signature, Title)    06/26/2018 (Date – m/d/yy)	(Signature, Title)    2018.06.26 14:42:25 -05'00' (Date – m/d/yy)

Region     Aeronautics     Rails & Harbors   
  FHWA     FAA     FTA     FRA

FHWA Final Type 2 Categorical Exclusion (CE)/WisDOT Final Environmental Report (ER). It has been determined **no significant impacts will occur** and a Public Hearing is not required.

After reviewing and addressing substantive public comments, updating the Draft CE/ER or Draft EA and coordinating with other agencies, it is determined this action:

**Will NOT significantly affect** the quality of the human environment. This document is a Final CE/Final ER.

**Will NOT significantly affect** the quality of the human environment. This document is a Final EA/Finding of No Significant Impact.

**Has potential to significantly affect** the quality of the human environment. Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required.

Stephanie Christensen, Env. Project Manager, EMCS, Inc.    9/5/18 (Print – Preparer Name, Title, Company/Organization)    (Date – m/d/yy)	(Signature – Director, Bureau of Technical Services)    9-20-18 (Date – m/d/yy)
(Signature, Title)    09/11/18 (Date – m/d/yy)	(Signature, Title)    2018.11.14 08:49:48 -06'00'    11/14/2018 (Date – m/d/yy)

Region     Aeronautics     Rails & Harbors   
  FHWA     FAA     FTA     FRA

# BUILD ALTERNATIVE B OVERVIEW



E

1

53

53 63

63

63

2

**LEGEND**

EXISTING RIGHT-OF-WAY

PROPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION

PROPOSED EASEMENTS

NAMEKAGON RIVER (ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY)

WISDOT BUREAU OF RAILS AND HARBORS LANDS

RELOCATION

US 53 BRIDGES OVER POTATO CREEK

RIGHT OF WAY FENCING

LITTLE MACKEY CREEK  
MACKEY RD

POTATO CREEK

WEST FRONTAGE RD  
TRAIL 7A

BENSON BLVD

LIESCH RD

POTATO CREEK

NAMEKAGON RIVER

ROSS RD

MILLER LN

O'BRIEN RD

WRST

EAST FRONTAGE RD

OAK HILL RD

3RD ST

2ND ST

TREGO RIVER ST

PARK ST

3RD ST

1ST ST

EXISTING US 53

WAGON BRIDGE RD

COMMERCIAL RD

ROSS RD

TREGO PARK

CEME TERY

WDNR

WRST

NPS

NPS

NPS

LAKESIDE RD



SCALE, FEET 0 400 800





**Division of Transportation**  
**System Development**  
 Northwest Region - Superior Office  
 1701 N 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
 Superior, WI 54880-1068

**Governor Tony Evers**  
**Secretary Craig** **EXHIBIT C**  
 Internet: [www.dot.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov)

Telephone: 715-392-7925  
 Facsimile (FAX): 715-392-7863

E-mail: [nwr.dtsd@dot.wi.gov](mailto:nwr.dtsd@dot.wi.gov)

February 11, 2020

ATTN: STEPHANIE CHRISTENSEN P.E.  
 EMCS INC  
 500 N 17<sup>th</sup> Ave  
 Wausau, WI 54401

RE: Project ID: 1197-00-00/70  
 Spooner - Minong  
 USH 63 - Trego Interchange  
 USH 53  
 Washburn County

Dear Stephanie:

We received your request for use of a WisDOT wetland bank site to mitigate wetland losses associated with the above project. Since there are no feasible on-site or near-site mitigation opportunities, we approve of this use.

We plan to mitigate the wetland losses at the Kimmes-Tobin Wetland Mitigation Bank Site located in Douglas County. Mitigation at this bank site will be within the same major watershed and floristic province as the project, which is in Washburn County.

There will be 0.55 acres of riparian wooded (RPF) wetland, 0.09 acres of aquatic bed (AB) wetland, and 0.24 acres of riparian emergent (RPE) wetland lost due to this project. The losses will be mitigated with 0.88 acres of wooded swamp (WS) wetland and 0.20 acres of shallow marsh (SM) wetland. In accordance with the WisDOT Wetland Mitigation Banking Technical Guideline, we will mitigate these losses at the following ratios, acreages, and wetland types from the Kimmes-Tobin Wetland Mitigation Bank Site:

Point #	Wetland ID	Impact Location (project station)	Latitude	Longitude	Type Impacted	Area Impacted	Debit Ratio	Type Mitigated	Area Mitigated
25-26&40	Site 5	168+25 - 171+50"WF", LT&RT Macke Rd	45.891783	-91.83081	AB	0.017	1.000	SM	0.017
	Site 5	168+75 - 169+50"WF", LT&RT Macke Rd	45.891783	-91.83081	RPF	0.399	1.300	WS	0.519
34&36	Site 6	913+00 - 914+00"NB", RT USH53NB	45.891891	91.827204	AB	0.020	1.000	SM	0.020
	Site 6	913+00 - 914+00"NB", RT USH 53 NB	45.891891	91.827204	RPF	0.006	1.300	WS	0.008
29,30&32	Site 7	913+50 - 914+50"SB", LT USHSB	45.892114	91.828204	AB	0.024	1.000	SM	0.024
	Site 7	913+50 - 914+50"SB", LT USHSB	45.892114	91.828204	RPF	0.006	1.300	WS	0.008
	Site 7	913+50 - 914+50"SB", LT USHSB	45.892114	91.828204	RPE	0.005	1.200	WS	0.006
23, 42, 44-45, 47, 49 & 55	Site 4	800+00 - 803+50"US", LT USH63	45.905725	91.812978	RPF	0.116	1.300	WS	0.151
	Site 4	797+00 - 800+25"OS", LT USH63	45.905445	91.814315	RPE	0.133	1.200	WS	0.160
	Site 4	797+00 - 799+00"US", LT USH63	45.905369	91.815177	RPE (D)	0.098	1.100	SM	0.108

Site 4	133+25 - 133+75, LT Existin Lakeside Rd	45.90613	91.815194	RPF	0.018	1.300	WS	EXHIBIT C
Site 4	133+50 - 133+75, LT Existin Lakeside Rd	45.90613	91.815194	RPE	0.005	1.200	WS	0.006
Site 4	133+50 - 133+75, LT&RT Existin Lakeside Rd	45.90613	91.815194	AB	0.004	1.000	SM	0.004
Site 4	134+25, LT&RT Existin Lakeside Rd	45.906316	91.815066	AB	0.015	1.000	SM	0.015
Site 4	134+75 - 135+00 Existin Lakeside Rd	45.906454	91.814989	AB	0.011	1.000	SM	0.011

If you have any questions, please call me at (715) 315- 0454 or email at [Brittney.Hubbell@dot.wi.gov](mailto:Brittney.Hubbell@dot.wi.gov).

Thank you,

Environmental Analysis and Review Specialist Intern

Cc: Aaron Gustafson - Wisconsin DOT  
 Amy Cronk - Wisconsin DNR  
 Paperless Representative by County- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**State of Wisconsin**

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
810 West Maple St.  
Spooner, WI 54801

**Tony Evers, Governor**  
**Preston D. Cole, Secretary**

Telephone 608-266-2621  
Toll Free 1-888-936-7463  
TTY Access via relay - 711



February 11, 2020

Stephanie Christiansen  
EMCS  
500 North 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Wausau, Wf 54401

**Subject: DNR Comment Letter**

Project I.D. 1197-00-00  
Trego Interchange - Potato Creek structures  
Washburn County

Dear Stephanie:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is providing full support of the Department of Transportation's decision to construct bridges instead of a box culvert on USH 53 over Potato Creek as part of the Trego Interchange. These bridges will address concerns DNR provided during the early design phase and will improve stream connectivity, aquatic organism passage, and flood resiliency.

We look forward to continued coordination on this project, and appreciate the opportunity to provide support for the proposed bridges. If you have any questions, please contact this office at 715-635-4229, or email at [amy.cronk@wisconsin.gov](mailto:amy.cronk@wisconsin.gov).

Sincerely,

Amy Cronk  
Environmental Analysis & Review Specialist

cc: Aaron Gustafson, WisDOT Northwest Region - Superior  
Beth Cunningham, WisDOT Northwest Region - Spooner  
Shawn Haseleu, DNR



cc: Aaron Gustafson, WisDOT Northwest Region-Superior  
Stephanie Christensen, EMCS  
Eric Sorenson, Ayres Associates  
Juliet Galonska, NPS  
Shawn Haseleu, DNR



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway  
401 North Hamilton Street  
Saint Croix Falls, WI 54024

In Reply, Refer To:  
I.A.I. (SACN)

February 11, 2020

Beth Cunningham  
WisDOT Division of Transportation Development  
Northwest Region - Spooner Office  
W7102 Green Valley Road  
Spooner, Wisconsin 54801

Re: USH 63/Lakeside Road Area Fencing Coordination  
Project ID: 1197-00-00/70  
Spooner - Minong, Trego Interchange

Dear Ms. Cunningham:

Thank you for your January 22, 2020 letter and request for comments regarding the proposed fencing on the north side of USH 63 between the WiDNR Wild River State Trail and the USH 63 Namekagon River Bridge. We have reviewed the design and concepts as presented and have the following questions and comments.

## Proposed Fence along USH 63

- The National Park Service (NPS) recognizes WisDOT's intent to lower the highway speed from 55 mph to 45 mph in the area of the Namekagon River Visitor Center and acknowledges WisDOT's desire to ensure safety for highway motorists, pedestrians and river users.
- The NPS also acknowledges that under existing conditions park staff and visitors can utilize this location to access the Namekagon River from the Namekagon River Visitor Center and vice versa. The proposed fence would sever the physical connection between the Namekagon River Visitor Center and the Namekagon River, and park staff and visitors will no longer be able to access the river at this location.
- If WisDOT decides to install the proposed fence:
  - o The NPS recommends the fencing materials be of earth tone colors to minimize fence visibility from the Namekagon River.
  - o The NPS recommends the installation of the fence to coincide with the off-season of peak visitor use along this stretch of the river. Ideally, this time would be either before July 1 or after Labor Day to reduce the potential for conflict between the public and the construction process.

**Existing Steps within the WisDOT Right ofWay - Public Access to the Namekagon River**

- If WisDOT intends to prohibit pedestrian access between the Namekagon River Visitor Center and the Namekagon River at this location with the installation of a fence, then leaving the river access steps in this location will present a public use conflict. The NPS recommends the river access steps be removed if WisDOT installs the proposed fence to resolve this conflict.
- Removal of steps may require an evaluation under Section 7(a) of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. This could be incorporated with the evaluation of the removal of the Lakeside Road bridge. Removal of the steps should be conducted with minimal disturbance to the existing vegetation. Streambank restoration should occur according to established best practices and in consultation with the NPS. Replanting with species of trees and shrubs native to Wisconsin and appropriate to the site is preferred. The chosen species should be, at minimum, 4 ft. in height at time of planting in order to provide visual screening.
- The NPS recommends the removal of the steps to coincide with the off-season of peak visitor use along this stretch of the river. Ideally, this time would be either before July 1 or after Labor Day to reduce the potential for conflict between the public and the construction process.

**Lakeside Road Closure:**

- We understand that Lakeside Road will be used as a temporary route for the Wild River State Trail. NPS is currently planning for advance notice to the public of the closure of the public accesses on the north and south side of the Namekagon River in the vicinity of the NPS visitor center. Do you have a current schedule of the closure of Lakeside Road?

**Wisconsin State Historical Society Marker:**

- We have reviewed several options and have concluded that this historical marker may be more appropriate in other locations not associated with NPS facilities.

Thank you in advance for the continued coordination regarding the Trego Interchange project. We appreciate the opportunity to review this proposed fence design concept and provide comments. If you have any questions, please contact Lands Program Manager Laura Hojem at 715-483-2261 or via email at [laura\\_hojem@nps.gov](mailto:laura_hojem@nps.gov).

Sincerely,



Juliet L. Galonska  
Superintendent

|

|

**WisDOT Division of Transportation System  
Development**

Northwest Region – Spooner Office  
W7102 Green Valley Road  
Spooner, WI 54801

**Governor Tony Evers  
Secretary Craig Thompson**

[wisconsin.gov](http://wisconsin.gov)

Eau Claire: (715) 836-2891 FAX: (715) 836-2807  
Superior: (715) 392-7925 FAX: (715) 392-7863



April 22, 2020

Juliet Galonska  
National Park Service  
St. Croix National Scenic Riverway  
401 North Hamilton Street  
Saint Croix Falls, WI 54024

**Subject: NPS Coordination Update**

Project ID: 1197-00-00/70  
Spooner – Minong, Trego Interchange  
USH 53, Washburn County

WisDOT is progressing with the design efforts for the proposed construction of the interchange improvement project at the USH 53 and USH 63 intersection in the Town of Trego, Washburn County.

Thank you for your response dated February 11, 2020 regarding the USH 63/Lakeside Road fencing. We are providing a response to NPS noted issues. Also, we are providing an update for requested various information regarding retaining wall and other work near the NPS visitor center.

**Fencing characteristics and installation timeframe**

The fencing type details were provided in the January 22, 2020 transmittal. WisDOT proposes to place woven wire fence. We will not be installing the barbed wire along the top. In addition, the gate will include a woven wire panel to avoid pedestrians passing through the gate. The gate is proposed to be locked to avoid use by pedestrians, and key sets will be provided to any necessary parties. Final coordination on this issue is ongoing.

The fencing will have a natural metal color that will oxidize over time. The posts are treated wood posts. The proposed fencing will not be painted artificially in any way as the woven wire fence will have a more natural feel than a painted chain link type fence that would have to be repainted over time. The woven wire fence will have the least visual impact on the viewshed to and from the river and will blend into the vegetation as it reestablishes in the disturbed areas. The fencing will be placed near the slope intercept (edge of grading) along USH 63 and additional vegetation removal is not planned for fence installation.

Construction of the project is planned to begin in Winter/Spring 2021 and extend to Fall 2022. Prior to Memorial Day 2021, temporary safety fence (i.e. orange temporary safety type fence that will be maintained by the contractor) will be placed along the north side of USH 63 to limit pedestrian crossings through the work zone. The temporary fence will implement a condition similar to the ultimate fencing condition and will allow Riverway users to adjust to this condition through the construction of the interchange project. Permanent fencing will be placed in Fall 2022 once USH 63 near the visitor center is completed. Timing requirements for placement of fencing as well as limiting work in front of the NPS visitor center between Memorial Day and Labor Day will be part of the contract provisions that the contractor must follow.

**Existing steps with access to the Namekagon River**

WisDOT inspected the site regarding the presence of the existing infrastructure at the Namekagon River. See the attached photos. WisDOT can agree to the following as part of the project work:

- Step removal on the bank of the Namekagon River; see attached photo demonstrating limits of step removal
- Restoration of the slope with topsoil, weed free mulch (or non-netted erosion mat), and native seed mix
- Installation of appropriate erosion control measures during removal

- Installation of 4-foot high trees in area at the top of steps (i.e. top of bank) to provide a visual buffer; WisDOT anticipates specifying evergreen, pine, or maple trees unless other specific tree or shrub species are requested by NPS; **please provide any requirements by May 15**
- Prior to installation of the trees, an on-site meeting can be held with NPS to stake the locations of the trees
- Removal of the steps is anticipated to occur in Spring 2021 prior to Memorial Day

WisDOT does not propose to amend the Section 10/404 permit or complete any additional work below the OHWM of the Namekagon River. We would request that removal of the timbers along the shoreline be completed by NPS along with removal of any signage. It would make sense that removal of these items by NPS would occur prior to or around the same time the contractor removal the steps in Spring 2021. Please confirm if this schedule and work can be accommodated by NPS.

See Section 7(a) evaluation paragraph below for additional discussion.

**Lakeside Road closure**

Lakeside Road will be used as a detour route for Wild Rivers State Trail (WRST) traffic during a period of Spring/Summer 2021 for the construction of a new WRST bridge over new realigned USH 63. The project anticipates providing a working window for the contractor with an interim completion to minimize the timeframe for the WRST detour. The exact timeline is being determined, but it is estimated that the bridge on the WRST will take up to three months to construct.

Because of the working restrictions in the river and in order to minimize impacts to Riverway users, it is anticipated that the Lakeside Road bridge removal would occur in Fall 2021 after Labor Day. Pending weather and other conditions in 2021, removal could occur in Fall 2022. A proposed schedule will be presented by the contractor during the preconstruction meeting. All agencies would be invited to that meeting in early 2021.

**Wisconsin State Historical Marker**

Thank you for your consideration of the accommodating the marker. WisDOT is currently working with Washburn County to determine an appropriate location.

**Retaining wall installation near the NPS Visitor Center**

A special use permit request was submitted to NPS for work within the temporary limited easement adjacent to the proposed retaining wall. The permit, dated February 3, 2020, contains details of the wall configuration that will be placed on WisDOT right of way. The temporary easement is for grading and blending purposes only. Topsoil will be blended and will be finished with weed free mulch and native seed mix.

The wall will consist of driving sheet piling to existing grade. The sheet piling work will not expose the foundation of the visitor center building on the back side of the wall. It is anticipated that the sheet piling will use low impact vibratory equipment and the contract will require installation of the sheet piling in periods to avoid peak visitor center use (before Memorial Day or after Labor Day). The material in front of the wall will likely be removed in Fall 2022 (exact time to be confirmed by contractor based on work operations) and the wall will be completed. The wall will be faced with concrete with a natural field stone appearance. A railing will be placed on top of the wall.

Temporary safety fence will be placed along the right of way and the temporary easement edge to separate the work zone from NPS property until retaining wall work (including restoration behind wall and placement of railing) is completed.

**Section 7(a) determination**

As Laura and Stephanie have discussed, the Section 10/404 permit has been submitted and reviewed by US Army Corps of Engineers. Prior to receiving this permit, the Section 7(a) evaluation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be necessary from NPS. Please provide an update on the evaluation and if additional information is required from WisDOT in order to complete the evaluation.

While WisDOT does not plan for work below the OHWM in the Namekagon River (see paragraph above), if the step removal within the WisDOT right of way may need to be addressed in the Section 7(a) evaluation as NPS

requires. We would request that this evaluation be completed in order to achieve a US Army Corps permit approval by early June.

**Status of final plans**

The design team is in the process of submitting plans to WisDOT for final reviews. Pre-final plans will be submitted to WisDOT on June 1, 2020 with revisions completed by August 1, 2020. The design team can transmit pre-plans to NPS in June for any review and comment within 30 days. Please let us know if you need any additional specific details prior to June.

**Preliminary schedule near NPS Visitor Center**

The contract will put provisions in place for limiting work during peak visitor center times from Memorial Day to Labor Day in 2021 and 2022.

- The project will be bid in December 2020. The contractor will present their project schedule at a preconstruction meeting, likely in February 2021. NPS will be invited.
- Project work will begin in early 2021 when the contractor will begin with tree clearing to accommodate restrictions for all tree removals prior to April 1.
- Grading and the WRST bridge construction activities will begin in Spring 2021 (April/May)
- Work on the retaining wall sheet piling at NPS is proposed to occur outside of the peak visitor periods (prior to Memorial Day or after Labor Day); finishing work in front of the wall and on the top of the wall will likely occur in Fall 2022
- Lakeside Road removal is planned for Fall 2021 after Labor Day. Pending weather conditions removal could occur in the Fall 2022.
- Work on USH 63 in front of the visitor center is anticipated after Labor Day 2022.

Please provide any additional comments or questions on these issues by **May 15, 2020** so that we can continue to refine the design.

We appreciate your feedback and involvement in this very important project. If you would like to coordinate a conference call or need additional information, please contact me at 715.635.4973 or [beth.cunningham@dot.wi.gov](mailto:beth.cunningham@dot.wi.gov).

Sincerely,

Beth Cunningham, PE  
WisDOT Project Manager

cc: Amy Cronk, WDNR  
Aaron Gustafson, WisDOT NWR  
Eric Sorensen, Ayres Associates  
Stephanie Christensen, EMCS

Enclosure: Photos of Steps at Namekagon River



**EXISTING STEPS AND SIGNS**



**EXISTING STEPS**



**EXISTING STEPS AND TIMBERS IN WATERWAY**



**EXISTING SIGN, STEPS, AND TIMBERS IN WATERWAY**



PROPOSED LIMITS OF STEP REMOVAL AND SLOPE RESTORATION

