

## Newport State Park

*Public input on a proposed variance to the Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Region Master Plan*

Public input period: August 16 to September 16, 2023

1	<p>As the DNR's August 16 News Release states, Newport Park is "a quiet alternative to bustling Door County." Let's keep it that way! Door County has a serious carrying capacity problem that it has yet to meaningfully admit to, let alone started to address. As a year-round resident of Door County and a regular user of the Park, I am opposed to the idea of having any equestrian trails in the park, and am alarmed at the "variance" proposal to double the length of trails that will be provided. I suspect that the "local equestrians" referred to in the News Release are intending to exploit the equestrian trails commercially (renting horses, providing trail rides, etc.), and that this constitutes yet another "give-away" to entrepreneurs and tourists. I am vehemently opposed to the equestrian trails proposal and particularly at odds with the variance. Please maintain this gem of a park as it is--as "a quiet alternative to bustling Door County".</p>
2	<p>Glad to be aware &amp; wondering where a map of the current &amp; proposed horse trails can be found-</p>
3	<p>Increasing the trail for horses is not a good idea as this will erode the Park's excellent conditions. It is especially a degradation as to the quality of the trails when you consider the Horse's will be leaving lots of fecal matter on the trails exposing hikers and especially children to a unhealthy situation</p>
4	<p>I just read an article about the DNR's plan to expand equestrian trails at Newport State Park. I think that is a terrible idea.</p> <p>I've been backpacking at Newport and various other places in Wisconsin for years and I always followed "Leave No Trace" ethics on the trails.</p> <p>I've been on several multi-use trails – backpacking/skiing, backpacking/ATV, and backpacking/equestrian, and the equestrian trails are terrible.</p> <p>The horses do more damage than the ATV's do. The ATV just pack the soil down; the horses tear it up.</p> <p>I've been on a couple backpacking trips where the equestrians are outside the designated equestrian trails and they are on the trails designated hiking only. The trails that were about 18" wide a few days earlier are now 5 feet wide. They also were going in and out of the lake and tore up the shoreline. I realize this was a couple isolated examples of careless riders – but it show the damage that several 1,000 pound animals can do to a previously pristine forest.</p> <p>The riders also "bully" other users on a multi-use trail. They expect hikers or snowshoers to stand to the side of the trail while they ride past you. I believe that is even in the park rules – give the equestrians the right of way. Why can't they stand to the side while we pass? So I have to stand in the mud or in the poison ivy while the horses pass?</p> <p>Horses and riders by their very nature cannot follow "Leave No Trace" ethics or even mainstream, environmental norms and I don't feel they belong in our state parks at all. If people want to own a horse, they can ride them on a farm or some other private land.</p>

	<p>I feel very strongly about this. I've ridden horses a numbers of times – but it has always been on private property. If the owner wants his land torn up that is his prerogative – but I don't believe equestrians should be tearing up our beautiful state parks, such as Newport. We often winter backpack at Newport and I think it is the most beautiful place in Wisconsin. Another favorite, for summer backpacking, is Rock Island. You feel like you are 1,000 miles away from work and city life when you are there. Thank you for helping to preserve these beautiful parks for our enjoyment!</p>
5	<p>As a individual that has lived up the road from Newport State Park my whole life I am in great support of adding equestrian trails to the park. My ancestors settled in what is now the area of the park in 1868 and I feel it would be a great honor to them that one of their decedents can support and enjoy the land that they once lived on and cared for.</p>
6	<p>I am a nearly lifelong resident of Door county and supporter of the state Park system. I am also a horse owner of 25 plus years, and have watched the struggles to try to make this happen at Newport State Park. I am in support of an equestrian trail getting developed in this location. We have been waiting patiently and sometimes frustratedly to figure out what are the correct next steps. There are many supporters willing to help move this forward. Please consider this addition to Newport State Park.</p>
7	<p>Avid horse trail rider in Green Bay and would love to see this happen.</p>
8	<p>I live in Door County &amp; have ridden all over all my life. As people are moving here more &amp; building our places to ride have decreased. There are State parks all over WI that offer horse trails but not Door County. This could potentially bring an untapped revenue to Door County.</p>
9	<p>Please consider horse trails in our state parks. All we want are nice areas to ride &amp; enjoy our nature on horseback.</p>
10	<p>My family believes there should be more horse trails in north east Wisconsin. Newport would be excellent as would Navarino State Wildlife area.</p>
11	<p>I'm writing to let you know I am in favor of the horse trails in Newport Park. Door County is extremely lacking areas where horse owners can enjoy their sport of horse back riding. Door County has become a vacation destination for so many sport enthusiasts, except for equestrians. It is a shame that we have so many parks that have land that isn't being utilized. Thumbs Up and local horse owners have supported this for a longtime, as have our friends from out of Door County. It is time to make this happen.</p>
12	<p>Having spent in excess of 30 years visiting Newport State Park year round, I find the idea of horses on the trails unacceptable. The paths are fairly narrow, making passing hikers go single file around each other. In summer, the paths have <i>large</i> amounts of poison ivy on <i>both</i> sides. Where are we supposed to step off when encountering large horses on these narrow paths? What happens to cross country ski trails when horsed use them?</p>

	<p>Many visitors to the park are unaware of horse behavior, and might reach to touch passing horses, not realizing that many horses are, "head shy" and may rear in fear of a hand passing near.</p> <p>Fragile plant life exists along the trails, and horse manure might contain unwanted plant seeds being introduced.</p> <p>Parking can be at a premium during peak use, and horse trailers would take up too much space.</p> <p>I am not anti horse, but do not feel that Newport State Park is the place for bridal trails.</p>
13	<p>My husband and I own a campground in Door County that caters to people who want to camp with their horses. We only have a limited number of trails on our property and we know that people would love to be able to ride on more trails. Especially in the state parks!</p> <p>Our business just opened in July of this year and we have had a steady stream of equine campers staying with us. Our outlook looks great for the future because people love Door County. It will definitely help with the tourism economy to offer more trails for the public to use.</p> <p>Our family has been members of Thumbs Up Riders for years and we have been diligently working with the DNR to get the trails approved in Newport State Park. Our group has hit many roadblocks along the way which is at times very frustrating. Our group has spent hours mapping out trails (on foot) to get approval and then have it turned back to us because they found one issue or another with the land that they said we could put trails on. I can't say for certain the number of years we have been trying to get these trails approved but I know that our group has done everything we can to try to make it happen. Including raising money to help support the trails and parking area.</p> <p>We would love for this to happen not only for us and people who love to ride, but for our guests and other horse owners in the area that would benefit from a safe riding area away from traffic and other dangers.</p>
14	<p>Please seriously consider expanding the equine trails. The more miles a trail is, the more likely you will have more people wanting to enjoy the trails and even come from a longer distance. The more miles a trail is, the more it will be used used by horse riders. Many riders put on between 10 and 15 miles in a day. And those that do not put that many miles on will return again to finish the whole trail. It brings money into the community with fuel and food.</p>
15	<p>I support the expansion for equestrian trails at Newport State Beach. Please assist in getting this expansion passed.</p>
16	<p>I am so excited to hear of the new trails for horses at this park. I hope we will be able to camp also as I would be traveling from Minn to enjoy these new trails.</p> <p>I fully support new horse trails. The more miles the better for me.</p>
17	<p>Please approve the Newport Variance to allow for Equestrian Trails! Thanks</p>
18	<p>As an avid horseback rider, I support a variance to provide more riding opportunities and development of trails in Door County. Most of us ride a few times a week and are willing to travel to see various parts of our lovely state of Wisconsin.</p>

19	<p>I strongly support the proposed variance to allow equestrian access in Newport State Park. Wisconsin equestrians have proved over the years they can peacefully co-exist in state parks across the state with a variety of other trail and park uses including but not limited to hikers, bikers, hunters, ATV/UTV users, etc. Continued expansion of equestrian access to trails and parks across the state will increase park usage, bring more dollars from visitors into local communities, and foster the growing economic impact equestrian trail use is having in our state.</p>
20	<p>I would like to express my support of the master plan variance to allow the expansion of equine trails in Newport State Park. 10 miles will appeal to a greater number of riders. Thank you for including the equine community in our State Parks!</p>
21	<p>I am writing to voice my support of expanding the horse trails at Newport State Park. I am a member of 2 different riding clubs, one in the Green Bay area and the other in the Shawano area, and most of us are avid trail riders who would welcome the opportunity to enjoy this wonderful park by horseback. And expanding the length of the trails to up to 10 miles would definitely make the drive to the northern part of Door County well worth it.</p> <p>Thank you for all that has been done so far and will continue to move forward in making these trails a reality.</p>
22	<p>An emphatic NO!</p> <p>WHY: This is the only park with good access to the water, the dark sky accreditation ( but in danger) trails that are more accessible for those individuals with some navigation issues. It is a gem not to be disturbed.</p> <p>There are plenty of areas inland for this, private hopefully, as already we are Exrtremely short staffed in the parks and now you add picking up horse manure, trying to nurse back damaged important bushes and plants damaged by horses. We cannot even staff the parks in the nature centers and at the gates!!!</p> <p>I do not know who or what organization is asking for this but they can go to private land, and pay for the purchase, development, staffing and upkeep.</p>
23	<p>I read with great concern about the potential of building a horse trail of, as yet, uncertain size at Newport state park. Now comes a proposed variance , seeking to expand and relocate the Master Plan proposed horse trail and accompanying support facilities.</p> <p>As a lifelong member of the Newport Wilderness Society and a user of the hiking and X -C skiing trails and facilities I respectfully object to ANY plans (by Master Plan or variance) involving Horses. The negative ecological impact would be far reaching for the proposed area, all to serve what must be a small group of users.</p> <p>Simply put, please stop this proposed variance and reconsider the impact on the Park through Horses being involved in a Newport SP Master Plan.</p>
24	<p>As a big fan and frequent user of Newport State Park, I am strongly opposed to the proposal to add equestrian trails of any length.</p> <p>We love Newport for its natural beauty and natural state. Horses in the park are not natural. They don't belong. They would do ecological damage to this beautiful spot. And providing trails for the very small percentage of horse-owners who might use them would</p>

	<p>come at the expense of the thousands of folks, like us, who engage in activities like hiking and cross-country skiing.</p> <p>We don't see either the demand or the need to change the nature of Newport for such a small group of potential users.</p> <p>Please leave Newport in its natural state. The impact of equestrian trails on the park is ecologically unsound and not supported by the population of the park's current users.</p>
25	<p>I think we most certainly need places to ride horses so I would be in favor. However, do I understand correctly the trail would be limited to .5 mile? That hardly warrants trailering your horse for such a minuscule riding opportunity. Did I get that .5 mile consideration correct?</p>
26	<p>This is a comment for the Newport State Park proposed equestrian trail. I have concerns not address in the DNR proposal. They include:</p> <p>No plan has been presented for the funding of trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing maintenance of the trail and associated facilities.</p> <p>The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail expansion will be located, other than to place it in the general vicinity of the Monarch and Rowleys Bay Trails, trails that are popular with hikers, snowshoers, and skiers throughout the year.</p> <p>Concern about ecological impacts to the park. Recognized and documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas include user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife. The variance proposal suggests that a lengthened and relocated trail would abut the Europe Bay Woods SNA, Newport Conifer-Hardwoods SNA, and Mink River Estuary SNA. These state natural areas are designated as such because of their outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species of plants and animals. A blanket variance allowing location of a horse trail adjacent to all three of these sites is cause for concern.</p> <p>Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates additional ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of equestrian users, most likely relatively few. No estimate has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</p>
27	<p>I am writing concerning the proposed horse trail for Newport State Park; a plan that I strongly oppose. As a homeowner in the Northern Door for over a decade, Newport has been my refuge. I have hiked every trail, and cross country skied some of these trails in the winter. Much of the appeal of Newport is its rustic state which distinguishes itself from the more frequented Peninsula State Park. Adding a horse trail would do nothing other than diminish the beauty and conditions of Newport. Has there been a poll to even determine if this option would even be put to use? As the article below indicates horse ridership is declining.</p> <p><a href="https://www.eastcoastequestrian.net/news/horse-industry-threatened.php#:~:text=Growth%20is%20stalling&amp;text=Cultural%2C%20economic%20and%20land%20use,and%20five%20percent%20once%20rode.">https://www.eastcoastequestrian.net/news/horse-industry-threatened.php#:~:text=Growth%20is%20stalling&amp;text=Cultural%2C%20economic%20and%20land%20use,and%20five%20percent%20once%20rode.</a></p>

	<p>The designation as a Dark Sky site was a major achievement. This is important to the demographic that uses Peninsula State Park. Having a horse trail does not. Leave the park as it is.</p>
28	<p>The Newport Wilderness Society is a volunteer organization with over 250 members that provide thousands of hours donated annually directed to trail and facilities maintenance within Newport State Park. We are currently constructing a 1,800-foot elevated boardwalk for improved access to the Fern Trail for visitors with disabilities. The group also provides funding for the park naturalist, much needed equipment, and helps coordinate major park events such as the Winter Candlelight Hike/Ski and the Perseid Meteor Event. The mission of the NWS is to help preserve and enhance the pristine and delicate ecosystem of the park to maximize the park experience for the public.</p> <p>The Board of Directors of the NWS is deeply troubled by the proposed variance to relocate and expand the planned horse trail at Newport State Park. The proposal omits any details on the specific location of the proposed trail, other than to place it in the general vicinity of the Monarch and Rowley’s Bay Trails, trails that are much utilized by hikers, snowshoers, and skiers throughout the year. If the trail is to be up to 10 miles long, it would occupy over 400,000 square feet of space in a relatively small park, with an inevitably adverse impact regardless of where it is ultimately routed. This is, in the opinion of the NWS Board, an outsized commitment of park space and resources for a very limited constituency of equestrian users.</p> <p>Our extensive experience in trail maintenance and construction gives the NWS a unique insight into the burdens that would accompany an effort to construct and maintain a trail of this size. Our principal concerns may be summarized as follows:  No plan has been presented for the funding of trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing trail and associated facilities maintenance.</p> <p>The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail expansion will be located to better understand the impact on existing park trails and facilities.</p> <p>We are concerned about ecological impacts to the park. Recognized and documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas include user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife. Without a clear plan or map outlining a proposed trail, it is difficult to comment on the extent to which any or all these impacts may occur with its development. While management areas 1 and 2 are not designated State Natural Area, they abut the Europe Bay Woods SNA, Newport Conifer-Hardwoods SNA, and Mink River Estuary SNA. These areas are designated as such because of their outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species of plants and animals – a blanket variance allowing a trail the potential to be created adjacent to all three of these sites is cause for alarm.</p> <p>Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates more ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of park users, most likely relatively few. There is no estimate that has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</p>

	<p>Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and we look forward to continuing our productive partnership with the Wisconsin DNR.</p> <p>Sincerely,  Newport Wilderness Society Board of Directors  Mark Glasser, President</p>
29	<p>This comment is regarding the proposed variance to open Newport State Park to equestrian use to a greater extent than described in the 2018 Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Master Plan.</p> <p>I have experience hiking trails in recreation areas that are open to equestrian use and have found that it has the adverse effect of diminishing the quality of the trail experience for hikers and bicyclists. Equestrian users do not return the trails to their original condition after use. Horse feces invariably accumulate on the trails, attracting flies, odors and obstacles that hikers and bicyclists need to be alert to avoid. After a while, it becomes pretty disgusting. Unless equestrian trail etiquette has recently changed, I doubt that the riders will be carrying plastic bags and willing to dismount as necessary to clean up after their horses. I also don't expect additional DNR staff will be added at the park to maintain these trails. The existing trail system is largely maintained by volunteers. If equestrian users were to join the volunteer corps to maintain the equestrian trails, that would be a mitigating factor.</p> <p>Frankly, I don't understand why even a 10-mile equestrian trail would be considered attractive for recreational purposes. My impression is that a much longer trail in largely open terrain would be much more suited to equestrian use.</p> <p>Given these considerations, I'm in favor of minimizing the equestrian use at Newport to the greatest extent possible.</p>
30	<p>I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed horse trail in Newport State Park. I feel strongly that it is a misguided idea for this area. Horses, their trailers and enlarged parking lots do not belong in this very special <u>wilderness designated</u> park! This part of Door County has yet to be spoiled by humans and their "toys" be they animal or mechanical. The DNR should be an agency that defends and protects such wild and natural spaces, not plan for its demise. The proposed trails are inappropriate for a park that is struggling already from the increased human presence. It is also a waste of taxpayer money to create a horse trail in Newport State Park. Is there really a great need for such a type of recreation? In my opinion there is not. Certainly it is a very exclusive group of people who require such accommodations for their horses. This accommodation is also exclusive to age and ability. Older folks, those with disabilities rarely ride horses and very young folks don't either. The state parks should not be spending money on exclusive accommodations, they should be striving for inclusive accommodations. I believe that if a horse trail is truly a necessity, perhaps it may be better suited to a park, state or county, closer to more urban areas, not at a wilderness park at the northernmost part of Door County. It is not easy to get there and driving a horse trailer up Highway 57 is hazardous especially with the increased traffic/boat trailers/RV's on the highway. Please reconsider this proposal! I hope to hear that the Wisconsin DNR will use common sense and that the proposal will be withdrawn.</p>
31	<p>Our concerns include:  No plan has been presented for the funding of trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing maintenance of the trail and associated facilities.</p>

	<p>The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail expansion will be located, other than to place it in the general vicinity of the Monarch and Rowleys Bay Trails, trails that are popular with hikers, snowshoers, and skiers throughout the year.</p> <p>Concern about ecological impacts to the park. Recognized and documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas include user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife. The variance proposal suggests that a lengthened and relocated trail would abut the Europe Bay Woods SNA, Newport Conifer-Hardwoods SNA, and Mink River Estuary SNA. These state natural areas are designated as such because of their outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species of plants and animals. A blanket variance allowing location of a horse trail adjacent to all three of these sites is cause for concern.</p> <p>Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates additional ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of equestrian users, most likely relatively few. No estimate has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</p> <p>We would appreciate a response to our concerns.</p>
32	<p>As a person who has been camping at Newport since the mid 70s I would be opposed to turning the premier backpacking park in the state into a horse trail. The article in the Peninsula Pulse was very confusing as was the draft plan. It seems like there would be anywhere from 10 miles to .5 miles added and a new parking lot to accommodate horse trailers. I and my family would be opposed to any of that.</p>
33	<p>After reading the information provided in the Newport State Park Master Plan Variance and looking at the maps provided, I am strongly in favor of the proposed changes. I am not currently a horse owner but I do know that horse trails are relatively hard to find while ATV and snowmobile trails seem to be everywhere. I would think that Newport State Park is an ideal location for additional, well-planned horse trails. In my opinion the environmental impact of the relatively light trail use by horseback riders, the lack of fossil fuel use while enjoying nature and the location are strong attributes in favor of the proposed changes.</p>
34	<p>According to your own report, you would have to cut trees and shrubs and disturb the soil (which would also be disturbed by horse hooves) to make equestrian trails in Newport State Park. The report admits that this could bring in invasives which would ruin the natural habitat of the plants that are already in the park, some of which are rare. When invasives enter a park, the park has to stay on top of them or they will take over, and this requires volunteers and more staff that the park may not have. Larger restroom facilities and a mown lawn might also require more work than they have staff to cover.</p> <p>How many local equestrians are we talking about here? The report says you've been approached by community horse riders, but it doesn't say how many, and that's disturbing. A few might not cause much disturbance, but if a whole bunch of horses came in, that could be devastating.</p> <p>Rather than trying to use a state park, couldn't you use Land Trust trails? Newport State Park doesn't want equestrians there, but I just read in the Pulse that the Land Trust is looking at a huge property in Southern Door. There are also lots of other Land Trust holdings that have trails. Maybe you could talk with them about it.</p>



35	I strongly support the continued work to have a horse trail in Newport State Park in Door County, WI. We have a very strong equine presence and the community would benefit from a trail that is horse friendly.
36	I have a few questions about the proposed equestrian trails in Newport State Park: 1. Will trees need to be cut to create these trails? 2. What constitutes a "high quality experience" for an equestrian? The view, the terrain? 3. How will increasing six miles of proposed trails to ten miles improve the experience? 4. Is there a good sense of how many people will use these proposed trails?
37	I am the current President of Thumbs Up Riders, the local trail group that has been working toward a public horse trail in Door County. Thumbs Up came into being roughly 15 years ago, when several horse riding locals sat down together and decided that a public horse trail would be beneficial, not only to us, but to future generations. Every year, we lose properties that we were once allowed to ride on. Farms get broken up, lots get sold, people move in and decide they don't want horses (or snowmobile trails) crossing their land. We have worked very hard, both at the county level and state level, to get where we were in 2019, after the Master Plans opened up and was determined that a public horse trail was needed and was sustainable in Newport and possibly Peninsula State Parks. I firmly believe that Newport can support a horse trail, with no problem. I firmly believe that we, as a club, can help with maintenance and any other support that Brian, the current manager, may need. I firmly believe that a public horse will benefit Newport State Park and the DNR in general, in the future.
38	I received an email with the information on a variance for the equestrian trail at Newport State Park. I have several concerns with this proposed plan. Residents and land owners have very strict rules due to the limited top soil and fractured bedrock can lead to easy contamination of the ground water. Has any study been done on the environmental impact of an equestrian trail? Including ground water contamination from the horse manure, erosion of the limited top soil from the grounds, and the extra run off created for both Lake Michigan and the Mink River Basin. Will this trail go by or through any wetland areas? As a property owner in Norther Door County I would like to see a environmental study before this plan moves forward.
39	My family and I are Door County land owners and frequent users of NSP. I understand that a group is considering adding equestrian usage to some of the trails that exist or to add additional trails for equestrian use. While I appreciate the consideration of other specialty groups for enjoying the Park I'd like to voice my concerns with this proposal. First, it is imperative that a thorough user and non-user research study be defined, developed, completed and analyzed before even considering such an undertaking. How many horse riders would use it annually? What are their expectations and needs for this type of amenity? How do non-equestrian Park users feel about such a proposal? What would they pay to use it? Would they volunteer to manage and maintain it? What about parking? Horse trailers and the animal ingress and egress takes up a lot of space. That means either building

	<p>a lot or taking it away from something else. There are so many questions that need to be answered even before the planning starts.</p> <p>I realize that this is just in the “idea” stage but my second concern is that it appears that no preliminary or formal equestrian plan has been developed for the trails. What about their ongoing management, maintenance, upkeep and minimization of ecological impacts. Funding for State Park projects comes primarily through usage fees and Friends group fund raising. Parks are financially strapped. Volunteers are donating many hours to keep Parks maintained. Properly constructing horse trails and their support areas plus the ongoing upkeep and maintenance expenses would be costly for potentially a very small number of users.</p> <p>Finally, what about safety? Trails must be groomed so both horse and rider are safe from underfoot roots, rocks, fallen trees etc. They also need protection from low hanging foliage above. The Parks are short on help as it is today. These duties would have to be either contracted out or the rider groups would have to be responsible for them. Even more importantly, what about the safety of the non-riders using the same trails. Unless the trails are closed to anyone not on a horse you run the high potential of serious injury or death. That would make this Park even smaller for those that are not riders.</p> <p>Let me say that i am all for expanding Park potential but it must be done judiciously to protect our natural resources while serving the greatest expanse of visitors. I hope that my comments are taken in the spirit in which they are intended. That is to lend some thoughts to the process of development of our Park in a way that is most beneficial for the greatest good.</p>
40	<p>I have been to other parks one in Kentucky and also Governor Dodge and Bong. The horse park at Governor dodge is beautiful. But when we camped there, in august. No one was using it. We were at Bong in June also a place with horse trails again not used during our time camping. In Kentucky at their state park in a stat that is all about horses again the horse park was not in use.</p> <p>We have parks that offer the horse trails, if they are not being used or over used why are we creating more. Newport is used so much by hikers and night sky watchers. It seems stupid to take space away from those places to duplicate something that is used by so few.</p> <p>I love horses but they are so messy and surely don’t follow the leave no trace rule</p>
41	<p>This letter is to show my 1000% support for the proposed horse trails in Newport State Park. How wonderful it would be to see horses back in that park! Years ago they were allowed to ride in there and our family always enjoyed seeing them. Please open up some trails for the equestrian users, we all need to share our state parks and we have many already in Wisconsin that allow horses to ride, and even have some wonderful horse camping areas for them. Wildcat Mountain S.P., Governor Dodge (who has a gorgeous new horse camp within), Northern and Southern Kettle Moraine, Hartmann Creek S.P., and High Cliff S.P. just to name a few. Especially since Door County does not have a county forest that the equestrians can use.</p> <p>The local riding club has already volunteered to create those trails and to keep those trails and parking areas maintained and clean.</p>

42	<p>Door County has a long history of horse trails in parks, and it would be nice to encourage this form of recreation to continue. We encourage hiking, skiing, and snowmobiling, so why not bring back horse trails? Please consider the positive impact on so many people in the community and the state.</p>
43	<p>I know that the Thumbs Up group has been working on setting up a horse trail for many years. I would love to see this come to fruition so the many riders in Door County could have a safe and beautiful place to bring their horses. These people have always proved to be responsible and respectful to their riding grounds. Please help them to make this happen.</p>
44	<p>I would like to voice my opinion regarding a horse trail at Newport State Park. I am opposed to the idea. Newport is the only wilderness park in the State. I believe adding horses to the mix would not only harm the environment but the wildlife. Peninsula Park may be a better option. It has more activities for more people where Newport Park is there for people to get away and enjoy nature as it is.</p>
45	<p>My husband and I are year-round residents of the Town of Clay Banks here in Door County. I'm writing to whole heartedly support the proposed 10 miles of Equestrian Trails in Newport State Park. It would be much appreciated to have a safe and beautiful place to ride, and equestrian trails in Door County are so scarce (Ahnapee Trail is nice, but cannot compare to Newport for scenery!) Sending sincere thanks for favorably considering this proposal!</p>
46	<p>We recently became aware of the proposed change to the Recreation Objectives for Newport State Park in the WI DNR 2018 Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Master Plan to include a proposed variance that if adopted would change the location and expand the location of the horse trail, and change the location of the parking area/toilet facilities.</p> <p>As a regular users of this park and neighbors, we have seen the usage of this WILDERNESS State Park skyrocket in the past 12 years. The naming of the park as an International Dark Sky Park has put it on the map. Traffic into the park some nights is unbelievable. Many of those same nighttime visitors have discovered the park and return in the daytime to hike, ride bikes, visit the beach, and picnic. Seeing families enjoy the park is wonderful!</p> <p>Every state park saw increased usage during the pandemic. This was especially true for all parks in Door County. The entire county has experienced a surge in popularity due to the pandemic. Newport State Park made it on to many "favorites" lists in the print media and on social media.</p> <p>With this increased usage, we have seen the park become less pristine. Trash is evident in the park, the trails have changed due to all the traffic. It is becoming less of a wilderness! Parking lot 3 is often at capacity.</p> <p>As this Master Plan was written in 2018, the impacts of the increased park usage due to being named a International Dark Sky Park and increased usage due to the pandemic couldn't have been known. Newport State Park no longer needs new activities to draw people to it. As the only designated WILDERNESS State Park in Wisconsin, perhaps the plan should be addressing ways to keep this gem wild and pristine, not seeking to increase its usage more, especially to make more money for the state.</p>

We are very concerned about the documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas including user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife.

We did a quick online search for horseback riding opportunities in Door County. There are several places already offering horseback riding in the county. Are there people really requesting this other than perhaps a nearby resident who could profit from establishing a stable nearby? Has any type of study done to determine the interest? If overwhelming interest occurs, what happens to the quality of the park? If only a few people use the trails, or primarily outfitters leading groups, is this really a good use of taxpayers money, especially at the expense of the only WILDERNESS state park in Wisconsin? We have no knowledge of who might be pushing for this change of increasing the mileage and moving the facilities, but it seems to us that someone who stands to gain financially must be interested. No one who truly cares about this park would be promoting this idea. We already have seen what happens at various bays in the county when the kayak outfitters show up. Get ready for a similar scene in the park!

As we all know who have lived through it, a lot has happened in five years. Increased usage of the park was a worthy goal five years ago. But, the time to acknowledge the limitations of five year plans is probably around year four. Honestly, we agree that this five year old Master Plan should be examined and perhaps even changed, but what we would like to see is the idea of horse trails removed from the plan altogether. Perhaps a better use of taxpayer dollars would be to increase education programs in the park so new generations can learn to appreciate and treasure nature. Every program we go to at the park is well attended and high quality.

As avid hikers and skiers, we already are forced to give up our favorite trails for hunting season. We cannot hike or ski between Christmas and New Years and several other weekends due to hunting. If the state of Wisconsin truly believes in maintaining a WILDERNESS State Park, then stop trying to be all things to all people. Having a park operating at capacity and beyond seems incompatible with a WILDERNESS state park.

If you have never been to this park, we invite you to come up and hike the park with us to see why it is worth preserving. There is nothing like it in all of Wisconsin. Please, please do all you can to help it stay wild and wonderful. Adding horse trails, parking lot, and restrooms will not do anything to preserve this beautiful place for future generations.

This seems to us to fall under the category of just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Just because something seemed like a good idea five years ago doesn't make it a good idea today. Call someplace paradise and kiss it goodbye doesn't need to be true for Newport State Park! Please reconsider the idea of horse trails in the park.

We are sincere in our invitation to come hike the park.

47	<p>As a local residing just up the road from Newport State Park, and a member of the Thumbs Up Riders, I am in full support of the variance. A lot of people are nay-saying the trail but they would like to ban the horse trail all together. It's already in the Master plan to have a horse trail so that cannot be changed. It's more important to have this variance approved so the trail is SAFE for ALL users as the original trail location runs through some pretty rugged and dangerous spots with all the rock fissures.</p> <p>Again, I fully support the variance being proposed.</p>
48	<p>Reading the proposed variance it is to cater to a few and not all users of the park. If revenue is the goal of the DNR, construct the 8 foot trails to a multi use facility and not discriminate. Charge a fee for all users, hikers,cyclists,horsemen,ATV/UV and dirt bikes. The last piece of a natural area,Newport State Park, should not be destroyed. The mission of the DNR is to protect the states precious resources so that it continues to provide ecological and social benefits for years to come. Just say NO to this variance. Although I am not a full time resident, I am a land owner and have a home on CTH NP.</p>
49	<p>I saw the discussion about equestrian trails at Newport, and as much as I love the idea of allowing a place for horses and their riders to enjoy, I do not believe Newport is the right place.</p> <p>Newport is our favorite park to hike at for the seclusion, quiet, and relaxation. Horses are very messy animals that are not cleaned up after on trails, which leads to smells and flies. Plus, horses are big, sometimes unpredictable animals, that I believe are a bit of a danger when trying to pass by safely. Governor Dodge has a few hike/horse trails which we now avoid at all costs because of this. The trails are beautiful, so it is a shame we no longer find enjoyment hiking them.</p> <p>It would be wonderful if there were more recreational trails connecting the towns throughout the peninsula for bikers, hikers and horse riders.</p>
50	<p>In reviewing the proposed Plan Variance, I have have the following questions/suggestion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Will the added trails be available for use by hikers, bikers?</li> <li>2. Will the added trails be open to horses all year, or closed in the winter (like the Ahnapee State Trail)?</li> <li>3. a map showing how the up to 10 miles of additional trails would be sited in the Park would be very helpful in evaluating this proposal.</li> </ol> <p>Thanks for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.</p>
51	<p>I learned about the proposed variance to Newport State Park to instate horseback riding trails via the Newport Wilderness Society. I live in Ellison Bay and hike the Newport State Parks trails daily. The proposed horse trail is a great idea, albeit I have some concerns.</p> <p>Offering a safe place for equestrians to ride and get their horses out of stables seems like a fantastic thing to add to our local parks and county. As many people have voiced on social media, horseback riding on our surrounding land is diminishing, and riding on highways and public roads is highly unsafe, especially in our busy tourist location. I love and enjoy Newport State Park and think the more people and animals that can safely and respectfully enjoy this space, the better.</p>

	<p>However, I am concerned about the upkeep of the proposed trail. On my daily hikes, there are already downed trees that take several days to weeks to be remedied. What employees or volunteers will have the time and funds to manage the increased 10 miles of proposed trails? The proposal does a great job of focusing on reducing the impact on the land and those who use the trails, but addressing these concerns to the public would be helpful.</p> <p>Ultimately, this area has a rich history of farmland and homesteads, most of which kept horses to survive or travel. Offering these public spaces to equestrians fits in well with the history of Ellison Bay and would be an excellent service to local riders and their steeds.</p>
52	<p>I am extremely excited about the prospect of adding an equestrian trail in Door County. This will create a safe place for locals to ride.</p> <p>Our riding spots are slowly disappearing across the county as it becomes more and more developed. Road riding is not safe for horses or riders. This is meets a dire need that has gone unmet for years based on inaccurate assumptions and bias against equine usage of our public spaces.</p> <p>Horses don't bring in any more invasive species than hikers, bikers or dogs do. Horse manure is essentially recycled grass hay and breaks down in a matter of days. I cant tell you how much dog poop I have run into while hiking, but it's a large amount and it's much more problematic than horse manure as it takes at least triple the time to break down.</p> <p>Also, as to the argument that equines represent a danger to hikers, I've personally been attacked by dogs while hiking. I feel much safer around equine trail riders than hiking around loose dogs. (Even though every park says leash your dog, a leash is a rare sight!)</p> <p>We also have a fantastic local riding club that has volunteered to clean and maintain trails.</p>
53	<p>I read reviews of your talent for finding compromise between stakeholders with conflicting interests. Congratulations on that ability and thank you for applying it to our public lands for all of us to appreciate and enjoy.</p> <p>I'm responding to the request for public input about the proposed equestrian trail at Newport State Park. My wife and I live 20 miles south of the park and hike there several times each summer. I consider the equestrian trail proposal with skepticism.</p> <p>As a Wisconsin resident who spends winters in Florida, I enjoy the public lands in both states, mostly for hiking and birding. One of my favorite hiking trails in Florida is now a 'mixed use' trail, which hikers share with horses. Although my interaction with horseback riders and their horses have been infrequent, the horses definitely impact my experience. Of course I leave the trail to allow the horses to pass. And I walk around their droppings on the trail. During one encounter it was clear that the horse was disturbed and uneasy in my presence. I presume the DNR has reviewed the liability risks that the horses will bring.</p> <p>I have not seen the proposed equestrian trail plan. I hope that it does not intrude into the current hiking paths at Newport SP, and I would prefer to not see horseback riders on their horses during my hikes. If the two can truly be isolated, so that there is no visual or physical interaction between the hiking paths and the equestrian paths, then I think extending the use of the park to equestrians is acceptable.</p> <p>Otherwise, I hope the project does not move forward.</p>

	Thank you very much for your consideration of these thoughts, and for your overall contribution to our state.
54	<p>I have concerns about the plan to develop horse trails in Newport State Park.</p> <p>My family visits Door County several times each year and we hike the trails at Newport on those occasions. We have come to appreciate the solitude we find at the Park and the relative lack of development there. We fear that introduction of horses and riders to the trail system - plus construction of related new infrastructure - will negatively impact our own and others' experiences at the Park.</p> <p>Our experiences with horses on trails at County, State, and National Parks have not been positive. I hope that the DNR will reconsider the plans to develop these trails at Newport.</p>
55	<p>By now I am confident you have received several comments on the Newport variance that would extend the horse trail up to 10 miles and have it intersect with existing human trails. I agree with the concerns stated by my fellow members of the Wilderness Society. Rather than repeat I would like to flesh out a bit what Newport is. It is a wilderness park. We only have a dozen or so campsites and one must hike to each. We are the only dark Sky park in Wisconsin. We are located at the tip of the Door peninsula.</p> <p>Our friends group is strong with good leadership. We are building an accessible boardwalk with excellent volunteer and financial support. It will be well over a thousand feet long. I am concerned that the variance will forever change the park.</p> <p>I first heard that the equestrian trail would be located in a little used open area and not interfere with human activity. The variance will significantly deteriorate the park's image plus there is no map and no plan for costs or maintenance nor thought as to invasive species etc. Other writers have covered this and other concerns.</p> <p>I am not 100% against a horse trail, but I could see a four mile loop up by parking lot 4, as this would not interfere with the nature center and the monarch trail and poetry trail, etc. I would certainly not support a Trail financially nor with volunteer time. What about maintenance?</p>
56	<p>I'm writing to express my disapproval of adding horse trails in Newport State Park. This large state park is a real jewel in the park system. As a year round resident here in Ellison Bay, my wife, family and friends use this park year round. The ruggedness of this property adds to the quality of Door County. I am a former science teacher, environmental educator, and former State of Wisconsin Environmental Education Board member. I am currently a Door County Land Trust, Clearing and Ridges member, and belong to numerous hiking groups who use the trails in the park often.</p> <p>I believe the inclusion of horse trails there would do great environmental damage to the land, the karst topography, fragile soil, fragile and protected vegetation. Are horses going to bring more invasive species, we have enough problems with the education of hikers being conscientious of cleaning their footwear. Who is going to cleanup where horses have tread?</p> <p>The maintenance of the park is done primarily by the friends group, who going to build the trail, horse folks or biologists?</p>

57	<p>I am opposed to having to share Newport State Park with horses. The Park is small and horses are big, and I love to see them in a field, not in an area where I am walking.</p>
58	<p>I can be frightened by large animals (and their irresponsible owners), so I personally don't really want to deal with horses in Newport State Park.</p> <p>My other concerns are the manure issues (odor, physical presence, and flies, ect.), and damage done to the trails by the horse's hoofs. If these can be mitigated by rules, special 'horse only trails', or scheduling horse days during the week, and the these rules enforced, I guess I would have to go along with it.</p> <p>I would probably stop attending the Park if things got out of hand. I stay away from horses and horse trails in existing parks. I like horses, it's just that they have special needs that the park currently does not have.</p>
59	<p>I am writing to you to express my concerns about the proposed 10 mile horse trail in Newport State Park.</p> <p>The fact that Newport State Park is designated as a wilderness park defines it as a park with as minimal development as possible. It's a wonderful state park with hiking trails, skiing trails in the winter, and extensive water front and a large Lake Michigan beachfront.</p> <p>The proposal for a 10 mile horse trail has no plan for funding of the trail, parking lot construction and maintenance. It has no map of the proposed trail, and no indication of how many trees and plants would have to be removed to create the trail. The proposal has no plan on how to address and remedy the wear and tear a horse trail would have on the environment. The Rowley's Bay Trail has many spring wildflowers, various ferns, fall Asters, and various mosses that would be harmed by making a horse trail. The Monarch Trail has active Bluebird boxes and is home to several nesting bird species.</p> <p>I would ask you and your committee to reject this plan and proposed variance because of the above reasons. To me it doesn't make any sense to create an unneeded horse trail by taking away hiking trails and open space in a wilderness park that is used and beloved by many.</p>
60	<p>My wife and I own a small home just north of Newport State Park. We have been considering moving to Wisconsin full-time because we enjoy the area a lot, especially the dark-sky wilderness park just south of us. We have been buying annual park passes for several years. I (Gary) am a park volunteer, and we are frequent users of the parks of Door County. Newport State Park is a heavily visited park, about 200,000 visitors per year. Even with that number of visitors, Newport's beauty lies in its wilderness.</p> <p>When we heard that there were plans to build horse trails in the park, we were surprised. This proposal seems at odds with the park's wilderness designation. There are many species of plants and animals that are unique to this part of Door County that would be negatively impacted. There are several studies regarding this that found that the ecological impact of equestrian trails on national parks in the US and abroad has been devastating to wilderness areas. Some of these negative impacts include damage to the terrain from the sharp hooves of a 1000+ pound animals with riders causing erosion/compaction of the soils and destruction of native species, the introduction of foreign fungi and invasive species by the horses, the grazing of sensitive species of plants by the horses, and the spread of disease and pathogens from the manure left by the horses. The Newport area is fragile, so we are hoping that</p>



	<p>the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will consider the negative impacts this could have on this extremely beautiful park before deciding on this change. There aren't many areas like this in Wisconsin or anywhere in the US. Perhaps there would be a park elsewhere that is more suitable to equestrian trails than Newport State Park.</p> <p>We believe that this proposal needs to have more planning and environmental impact research before it is considered. If you do have studies about the environmental impacts this would have on the park, please share them with us. We want to be informed about what is happening with the park. This is one change that we definitely do not support.</p>
61	<p>Transcribed comments from a phone call to John Pohlman:</p> <p>Thanks for calling last week – here’s my summary of your comments and concerns related to the proposed variance to expand equestrian uses at Newport State Park.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment of potential impacts. You are concerned that an adequate analysis of environmental impacts from constructing and operating up to 10 miles of equestrian trails has not been completed. In particular, you are concerned about impacts that creating more trails will have on rare plants and other sensitive resources in the park. You are also concerned that the karst features in Management Area 2, where equestrian trails are proposed, present a hazard to horses and riders. You stated that there does not appear to be any evidence that the evaluation to get this proposal into the master plan was at all thorough. You believe that very basic checks like infringement onto state natural areas or a trail over dangerous karst geology were not checked.</li> <li>2. Appropriateness of equestrian use in the park. You expressed concern that the proposed equestrian use (as well as the large trailers and trucks that transport horses to the park) are not consistent with the park’s objective of being a property that maintains its wilderness character and provides a remote, quiet experience for visitors. You stated that the parking lot would be within 100 yards of several active trails and that many if not most trucks used haul horse trailers and horses are very loud</li> <li>3. Parking area. You believe that using the former gravel quarry on Newport Lane as a parking area is problematic because its location would require horseback riders to cross existing trails and possibly the entrance road to get to the main portion of Management Area 2. As an alternative, you suggest that the open, grassy area at the end of Wilderness Lane would be a better location because it would provide access to Management Area 2 without having to cross existing trails or roads.</li> <li>4. Establishment of a livery adjacent to the park. You asked about if there was a possibility that someone behind this proposal wanted to establish a business being established just outside the park that would provide equestrian riding opportunities for hire in the park. As we discussed, I am aware of a livery next to Governor Dodge State Park that leads guided horseback riding trips on the equestrian trails in the park. Here’s a <a href="#">link to that business</a>.</li> </ol>

	<p>5. You questioned how horse poop be handled? You stated that dog owners are required to clean up after their dogs, which you state is a great benefit to hikers and children.</p> <p>If I have not accurately summarized your comments, please let me know so that they can be edited as needed. The summary of your comments will be included in the public comments received on the proposed variance.</p>
62	<p>I am writing to you to voice my concerns about a potential horse trail at Newport State Park.</p> <p>I am a Door County resident and frequent visitor to Newport State Park. I am vehemently opposed to a plan to incorporate a horse trail within the park. Door County Parks are already overcrowded with too many mixed and allowed activities and all the rule infractions that accompany this. I echo the concerns of the Newport Wilderness Society:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No plan has been presented for the funding of trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing maintenance of the trail and associated facilities.</li> <li>• The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail expansion will be located, other than to place it in the general vicinity of the Monarch and Rowleys Bay Trails, trails that are popular with hikers, snowshoers, and skiers throughout the year.</li> <li>• Concern about ecological impacts to the park. Recognized and documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas include user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife. The variance proposal suggests that a lengthened and relocated trail would be the Europe Bay Woods SNA, Newport Conifer-Hardwoods SNA, and Mink River Estuary SNA. These state natural areas are designated as such because of their outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species of plants and animals. A blanket variance allowing location of a horse trail adjacent to all three of these sites is cause for concern.</li> <li>• Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates additional ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of equestrian users, most likely relatively few. No estimate has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</li> </ul> <p>Let's not take any chances of damaging this jewel of a park. Horse riding enthusiasts can find other places more appropriate to ride than a state park.</p>
63	<p>My wife and I live on the fringes of Newport State Park on the north end of the Door Peninsula. Almost weekly we take advantage of the trails and beaches including cross country skiing during the winter months on the well groomed trails. We find the idea of bringing a horse trail to this gem very disturbing. Only recently, after year of effort has the Park received the Darkness designation. This Park in the last few years has been discovered by a</p>

	<p>considerable number of additional non-residents increasing pedestrian traffic to levels unseen before.</p> <p>The Park already serves as a balanced habitat for wildlife plant and animal species. Bringing in an alien animal species with its browsing and wastes has the potential to upset this delicate ecological balance. It is hard to envision development of a trail in the dense nature of the forest without serious cutting, culling and plowing vegetation and trees.</p> <p>There is no telling where these animals may originate from and what potential disease may be brought in. More land will have to be repurposed to accommodate parking for the vehicles and trailers.</p> <p>Staffing has been an overriding issue throughout the Peninsula since Covid. One has to question, if this plan goes forward how will these “trails” and extra facilities be maintained and managed? Will the residents and visitors have to subsidize the extra expense for such maintenance?</p> <p>One has to question where the impetus for having a horse trail in this region stems from. As one drives through the county one sees very few horses, and those that are seen are on large tracts of more open and far better acreage more conducive to horse riding.</p> <p>However this is developing I ask you please to reconsider the premise, poll the residents in the neighboring townships (perhaps with a non-binding referendum), and consider other options.</p>
64	<p>I am writing to share my thoughts regarding the proposed horse trail variance at Newport SP.</p> <p>Firstly, let me tell you about myself. I am a retired veterinarian of 36 years, a Master Naturalist for the state of WI, and a citizen scientist at Newport State Park. My husband and I are year round residents in Door County, and are active volunteers with the Newport Wilderness Society.</p> <p>We have been enjoying Newport State Park for decades, and in all seasons of the year- camping, cross country skiing, hiking, kayaking. As you know, Newport is the only wilderness park in the state park system. Newport, in my opinion, is the GEM of our state parks. It offers a quiet and solitude that is rarely found, And worth preserving.</p> <p>I am not against a horse trail in a state park. It is another way people can enjoy the beauty of outdoor Wisconsin. My concerns are the expansion of a horse trail into sensitive areas of <i>this very special park</i>.</p> <p>With the addition of horses into the park, we will be introducing invasive species from their fecal matter -any non native grass seeds -reed canary grass tc.- will spread into and compete with our native flora, including many plants that are rare or of special concern. This impact will be less likely if we stick to the original plan</p> <p>Horses will compact the soil, and lead to erosion along their trail, so it makes sense to me to contain this trail to the original length of 4-6 miles, and to keep it within the area originally proposed (along Newport Lane, and north of the Park Office). The original plan will keep the</p>

	<p>Monarch and Rowley's Bay Trails -both very popular with hikers -separate from the horse trail, thus allowing a "wilderness" experience for the thousands of hikers this park sees every year.</p> <p>My opinion is that if Newport State Park must support a horse trail, then the original plan of 4-6 miles in the original location will have the least impact on our one and only wilderness park.</p>
65	<p>I'm writing you today as a concerned citizen of Wisconsin, specifically about the horse trail variance currently proposed for Newport Park.</p> <p>My wife and I, who own a vacation home south of Egg Harbor and spend most of our weekends there, just heard about this issue from friends several weeks ago, and since then I've learned how little has been done to study the impact of the proposed changes to Newport.</p> <p>I'm shocked that this is getting serious consideration (if in fact, it is!) without have solid data on the expected environmental impact, the resulting assess impact on existing hiking and biking trails, the impact on parking access, the number of people who would actually benefit from the proposed changes, alternative locations where trails could be added and that corresponding set of impacts, and finally, how this variance will be paid for now and in the future.</p> <p>My goodness, it sounds as though there are far more unknowns than known facts on this matter, and I'm very uncomfortable thinking that the DNR could possibly give this serious consideration without a far more balanced and thoughtful approach to planning and decision-making.</p> <p>I trust that you will be listening to the voices of people like my wife and I who place great value on Wisconsin's wonderful parks and want to ensure that we and generations to follow continue to to enjoy everything they can offer to the broadest cross-section of both Wisconsin residents and visitors.</p>
66	<p>No to horses at Newport State Park.</p>
67	<p>My wife and I are full time voting residents of Northern Door County. We have had a home at the corner of County NP and Timberline Road since 1990. One of the key things that attracted us to this area was the presence of Newport State Park, Wisconsin's only Wilderness Park. The natural wonder of Newport Park has more recently been enhanced by its designation as one of our nation's eighteen Dark Sky locations, only the second one in the Midwest. We have been supporters of the park through our vehicle sticker purchases and our membership in the Newport Wilderness Society for decades.</p> <p>Since its creation, Newport Park has been special and unique place, precious to visitors and residents alike. As a Wilderness Park, Newport is home to many rare and relatively rare indigenous species. The existing trails and camp sites have been very carefully developed and cared for to minimize invasive species and to maximize positive experience to users of the</p>

park. As a Wilderness Park, Newport is a place to escape the hustle-bustle of our day-to-day world and enjoy the peace and quiet and beauty of Northeast Wisconsin's best nature.

The addition of horses and horse trails and supporting facilities will totally change the character of the portions of the park that are affected. The effects will not just be in the areas of significantly expanded parking, new toilet facilities, plus new and expanded trails. This park is minimally staffed, at times having no DNR employees on site. That means no control or oversight to make sure equestrian users use safe practices, keep separated from hikers and bikers or clean up after their animals. The areas used by horses will quickly become shunned by those who have been coming to the park for its peaceful quiet wilderness atmosphere. Contrary to the Master Plan Variance Proposal, there is no safe way that areas of the park can be shared by horses and people on foot or on bikes.

Plus, to state the obvious, equestrian trails are designed to attract riders and their horses. Horses will have to be transported to and from the park through the idyllically quiet, rural neighborhood surrounding the park. The vehicles used to pull those horse trailers are larger and heavier than the traffic that currently comes to the park using County NP and Timberline Road. The roads in this neighborhood are not designed or built to handle trucks with loaded horse trailers, to say nothing of the roads within the park itself. The blacktop entrance road to the park today has been in bad repair for several years. Adding heavier traffic will either destroy the existing road into and in the park or require a significant increase in park road maintenance costs.

The proposal's anticipated benefit of "result in more visitors to the park and increase park revenue" is in fact exactly wrong. Any significant equestrian use and associated traffic will reduce the attractiveness of Newport Park to those who now use the park. The presence of large animals on trails will reduce trail use by all but a few. County visitors coming to the park are heavily weighted to families and nature lovers. A large portion of the locals who frequent the park are senior citizens (that's who lives here). Families with children and older adults will not feel safe sharing with horses, no matter how gentle the 1,000+ pound animals are. Add that the inevitable presence of piles of horse manure on trails and in the area of Parking Lot 4 will be a major issue. There is not park staff to clean this up. Each of these factors will make the park less attractive. Thus the park visitor revenue is very likely to decrease.

Finally, creating wide horse-friendly trails, welcoming 1,000+ pound animals, encouraging users with larger vehicles pulling heavy trailers are all anathema to the concept of a Wilderness Park. Remember Newport is Wisconsin's only Wilderness Park. This proposal for "enhancing" the Park by adding equestrian trails and facilities is a lot like enhancing the state capital building by adding a skateboard lane in the hallways shared by visitors and legislators.

You must also consider that since a large portion of the current care of Newport Park is done by volunteers, if you discourage the volunteers by destroying part of the beauty of the Park, that will also significantly increase the cost to maintain the park. Either the DNR will spend more on the Park or the Park will deteriorate. And all for reduced revenue. It's a no win situation.

We hope the DNR has the wisdom to not consider the proposed plan variance supporting horse trail expansion at Newport State Park.

68	<p>My wife and I are in favor of expanding access for horses and the development horseback riding trails in Newport State Park.</p> <p>In historical contrast to the use of work horses when Newport Park once was the site of an early lumber settlement, we believe that today’s horseback riders should be able to experience and also enjoy the natural beauty of what since has become one of Door County Wisconsin’s most scenic parks.</p>
69	<p>I am a board member and volunteer of the Newport Wilderness Society, and an avid visitor to Newport State Park. I’m writing to express my deep concern of the possibility of an equestrian trail within the park.</p> <p>Newport State Park is a natural gem and the only designated wilderness state park in the State of Wisconsin. A horse trail would negatively impact native vegetation, and cause damage to the precious ecological system in this park. Placing a horse trail within the boundaries of this park would impact the trails and space used by numerous hikers, snowshoers, skiers, and all people using the trails to experience the natural wilderness of the park.</p> <p>This potential damage and negative impact of a horse trail in Newport State Park for use by a limited number of equestrian users could irreparably damage this natural area for generations to come. If you have not visited Newport State Park, I would highly suggest that you walk the trails of this treasure within the Wisconsin State Park System.</p> <p>As an advocate for the park I strongly object to the Newport State Park Master Plan Variance and the placement of a horse trail within this (relatively small) “designated wilderness” Newport State Park.</p>
70	<p>We're writing to comment on the above variance. As long time users of the trails at Newport for hiking and XC skiing, we enjoy that the current trails are minimally disruptive to the trees and lightly maintained. We have a difficult time understanding how a 10 mile horse trail could be built that would not be a very different thing and potentially be quite disruptive for hikers like us. Not having any clear indication of where and how the trail would be integrated with the existing trails only heightens our concern. The ecological impact on the park of what sounds like a larger and more heavily maintained trail also concerns us. We wonder if any potential use estimates by equestrians have been done? We appreciate that DNR must balance needs of multiple users but this proposal sounds like it could greatly decrease the quality of experiences for many hikers while benefiting a much smaller population of equestrians. Any such trail should be limited to areas where it limits the impact on hikers and to the original size of the master plan rather than the proposed variance. Thank you for considering our comments, and for all you and the other staff do to manage this uniquely wonderful park.</p>
71	<p>I am opposed to the proposed expansion of equestrian trails at Newport. This variance would provide for a substantial addition of facilities and trail development and it is in conflict with the mission of Newport, a wilderness park beloved for its quiet and wildness.</p>

	<p>Going from 4-6 miles to perhaps as much as 10 miles is quite a bit of extra trail development, necessitating cutting of trees, introduction of invasive species (which horses are very adept at), and fragmentation of the forest. Your analysis recognizes this and decides it is inconsequential. The overlap with hiking trails is not appropriate. The expense of adding the facilities is significant, and, given the location of Newport, it is questionable that that amount of equestrian trails would draw large numbers of riders.</p> <p>That said, I have been hiking at Newport for over 35 years. I have watched the wilderness be degraded by overuse and, more lately, by adding bike trails on top of many of the trails, causing erosion and trail damage, not to mention noise. It is significantly unpleasant to be walking in a quiet forest, watching and listening for wildlife like porcupines and red squirrels, only to have fast bikers zoom by.</p> <p>Really, is this a wilderness park or not? What is your mission? Is it to offer all manner of trail use in one park, for anyone who asks, or is it to maintain the habitat for wildlife and quiet experiences in one of the most unusual and special parks in the whole midwest? What Newport offers is not duplicated. That is why many of us seek it out.</p> <p>Riding horses is a wonderful activity, but it doesn't belong at all at Newport, let alone expansion of the opportunity. I suggest that you collaborate with other entities to provide for these recreationists. Don't continue to degrade Newport.</p>
72	<p>I am a member of the Newport Wilderness society. I want to add my voice to the many others you have heard from about the proposed variance. I think the objections presented by the board are powerful reasons to stick with the main plan that was already approved rather than reinvent the wheel. I'll just repeat, repeat, repeat. Thanks for the opportunity to express my opinion and for listening to all concerned.</p> <p>Newport Wilderness Society has provided almost 40 years of support to Newport SP. Our extensive experience with trail maintenance and construction gives NWS a unique insight into the burdens that would accompany an effort to build and maintain a trail of this size. Our concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No plan has been presented for the funding of trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing maintenance of the trail and associated facilities.</li> <li>• The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail expansion will be located, other than to place it in the general vicinity of the Monarch and Rowleys Bay Trails, trails that are popular with hikers, snowshoers, and skiers throughout the year.</li> <li>• Concern about ecological impacts to the park. Recognized and documented impacts of horse riding in natural areas include user conflict, damage to the soils or trail incision/deepening, erosion, development of informal trail networks, loss of vegetation height and cover, browsing of shrubs and grazing of herbaceous vegetation, seed dispersal of introduced and invasive species, transport of fungal pathogens, changes in plant species composition, nutrient enrichment from feces and/or urine scalding, and disturbance to wildlife. The variance proposal suggests</li> </ul>

	<p>that a lengthened and relocated trail would abut the Europe Bay Woods SNA, Newport Conifer-Hardwoods SNA, and Mink River Estuary SNA. These state natural areas are designated as such because of their outstanding natural communities and critical habitat for rare species of plants and animals. A blanket variance allowing location of a horse trail adjacent to all three of these sites is cause for concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates additional ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of equestrian users, most likely relatively few. No estimate has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</li> </ul>
73	<p>I am a resident of Baileys Harbor Wisconsin, a member of Newport Wilderness Society, a volunteer with the Friends of Newport State Park, and a frequent visitor to Newport State Park. I have recently become aware of the DNR’s plan to create equestrian trails at Newport State Park. I have read the plan, and the proposed variance and am strongly opposed to going forward with it.</p> <p>I can’t imagine the disruption of so much of the beautiful natural landscape to facilitate what is proposed in the project. I have been on all the trails of the Park, in every season, and really think all that would be needed to do to facilitate this plan would be a detriment to my experience and to the Park in general.</p> <p>I think the the negative impact on a great number of people, many of who I know and many of the people I meet in the Park and interact with in my volunteer capacity, greatly outweighs what I imagine would benefit a very small group of people.</p>
74	<p>I am a full time resident of Ellison Bay and close neighbor of Newport State Park. I am a frequent hiker and volunteer and enjoy this wilderness park in every season. There are so many unanswered questions regarding this request.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The exact location with a map has not been provided. This prevents most park users from understanding what impact the equestrian trails will make on the majority of hikers and bikers usage.</li> <li>-Has the area been evaluated for the existence of rare or protected plants or animals that might be located on the areas that will be affected?</li> <li>-What is the estimated number of riders that would use the equestrian trails?</li> <li>-Do the equestrian trails require widening the current trails?</li> <li>-How will the trails be maintained since much of our current trails are maintained by the parks volunteers?</li> </ul> <p>Because so many questions have not been published yet I do not support this variance. I hope the DNR will reconsider this variance and keep Newport the great wilderness state park that it is today.</p>
75	<p>I am reaching out to provide feedback to you regarding the Master Plan variance for Newport State Park in Door County. I support expanding the use to allow equestrian trail use. The</p>



	<p>equestrian community in our area and state wide needs safe riding trails. This is a great resource to share with equine lovers.</p>
<p>76</p>	<p>I am very opposed to the proposed variance for expanding the horse trail permitted in the Newport State Park Master Plan. Recreation opportunities abound; relatively undisturbed natural areas do not. It seems that every time an interest group wants an expansion of recreational space, nature itself must suffer the loss. In the present case, it looks like many aspects of ecological damage to various protected areas have not been carefully considered. The Wisconsin DNR should be the line of defense against overdevelopment of natural areas.. As a long time resident of Door County, I ask you and your colleagues to remember that nature is the most important stakeholder.</p>
<p>77</p>	<p>I am writing to express my concern about the proposed development of horse riding trails in Newport SP, and specifically the variance proposal to the 2018 Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Master Plan.</p> <p>I have been a member of the Newport Wilderness Society, the park friends group, for several years. NWS has provided almost 40 years of support to the park. We are well versed in the efforts (both in volunteer hours and expenses) required in building and maintaining trails of this nature.</p> <p>My concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No plan has been presented for the funding of the trail and parking lot/facilities construction. Furthermore, no plan has been presented for future and ongoing trail maintenance.</li> <li>• As an ‘external partner’, is it not required that their trail building proposal would need to be specific about funding sources?</li> <li>• Have environmental, cultural, and historical assessments of the proposed trail area been completed?</li> <li>• Concern about ecological impacts to the park, including spread of invasive species, impacts to native vegetation, and potential damage to soils or soil erosion based on where the trail would be located. Expanding the horse trail to 10 miles creates more ecological disruption to the park and benefits an unknown amount of park users, most likely relatively few. There is no estimate that has been provided showing how many riders would use the horse trail.</li> <li>• The president of the local horse riding club, Chrissy Bergwin, states in a post on the NWS Facebook page, that she has not read the variance. A few other statements she made imply that the club has no secured sources of funding.</li> </ul> <p>Horses and ‘wilderness’ have had a long, historical relationship in the United States. And it makes sense that horses be allowed in the wilderness...when we are talking about millions of acres of wilderness.</p> <p>Newport SP is 2,500 acres of already ecologically-threatened wilderness. Please don’t add more stress to this jewel of a park in Northern Door County. Especially when the entity behind this idea seems to have to have no plan other than desiring another place to ride in the county.</p>

<p>78</p>	<p>As a member of the Newport Wilderness Society and year round resident of Ellison Bay, I oppose the variance to expand the equestrian trail at Newport State Park.</p> <p>The Newport Wilderness Society is the oldest friends group in the State of Wisconsin incorporated in 1988. I volunteer frequently at the park through the friend’s group to help keep the trails open and maintain the facilities. Although the master plan was modified in 2018, I don’t know of any written description or drawing of the proposed equestrian trail.</p> <p>I don’t understand how a variance can be considered without a written or drawn plan in place. The cost of cutting and maintaining the horse trail, maintaining the equestrian parking area and restroom facilities has to represent a significant expense. Is this going to be funded by the DNR? These are just basic concerns.</p> <p>NSP has ~ 22 miles of hiking trails and is the only wilderness park in the state. It is also the only Dark Sky Park in Wisconsin. It's enjoyed throughout the year by thousands of visitors and hikers. My understanding is that an estimated quarter million visitors came to the park during the pandemic. How many equestrians will be served by this new trail?</p> <p>There are so many unanswered questions regarding this request for variance. It starts with a written or drawn plan. It has to include heritage, cultural and environmental assessments and address potential spread of invasive species. It has to address the budgeting for creation and maintenance of the trail.</p> <p>The five year old Master Plan should be reconsidered in it’s entirety.</p>
<p>79</p>	<p>Am so happy to hear the DNR is still considering equestrian trails as well as expanding them in Newport State Park. There are no safe trails this far north and riding along roads are extremely dangerous especially with the explosion of tourists bringing more highway traffic to the county. I know a lot of people are happy to hear of the plan, and I would just like to say that some of the naysayers really don’t have a valid reason for their objection to the trails.</p> <p>My take on some of the objections are as follows</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There aren’t that many horseback riders up here, and I doubt that opening up trails would bring a substantial amount of horse traffic up to the park – it’s not a rodeo. I would think only residents would ride the trail and there would not be a lot of out of state or out of county interest as 10 miles of trails are not that long for someone to travel a good distance for.</li> <li>2. There are concerns about horses bringing in non-native species or invasive species to the park, of which there are plenty already in the park. Humans, automobiles, bicycles, dogs, coyotes, birds and deer have all contributed to this issue whereby a horse has probably never entered the park. We can’t blame that problem on horses.</li> <li>3. Horses don’t urinate on bushes and they don’t scald vegetation (like dogs, coyotes or deer) nor do they eat forest vegetation. They are grass eaters, and when trail riding, horses usually don’t eat anything.</li> <li>4. The park is big enough that if a trail crosses another trail, one would not disturb the other in passing.</li> </ol>

	<p>5. Not sure why the complaint would be about clearing trails. Horseback riders have a good sense of when trails need some brush to be cleared. They are certainly not as picky as some of the hikers that we experience.</p> <p>6. Horses don't make ecological disasters. My family had a riding stable on our family farm on Ellison Bluff in Ellison Bay, WI in the late 50's - early 60's. We had trails through the woods and bluff overlooking Green Bay, and horseback traffic didn't put the woods or vegetation in peril. In fact the woods where we rode are still in pristine condition. I am thumbs up for equestrian trails in the park, and I personally feel that the objections to the trails are invalid and unfair to those residents or others that want to enjoy the park in a different manner than hiking. Let the park be enjoyed by all.</p>
80	<p>Please accept this email as written comments in opposition to the proposed variance regarding equestrian trail/s at Newport State Park. The WDNR has the obligation to protect and restore natural areas, not destroy natural areas or "wild areas" for other "experiences". In addition, the other "experiences" are for a small subset of the population. The park can't be everything to everyone.</p> <p>Door County, and specifically Newport State Park, is a unique landscape comprised of maple - beech forest, and other flora and fauna not found in other areas of the state. As such, allowing a use that destroys the flora and fauna is reprehensible. Horses do not belong in Newport park. The variance proposal is destroying 3.8 acres to "up to" 5.8 acres. Total direct destruction equals 7.6 acres "up to" 11.6 acres. Total indirect destruction – the entire park. Why is this even being considered.</p> <p>The park was established to preserve, for future generations, its great natural scenic beauty and wild, undeveloped character with outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive natural types of recreation, as well as ecological and geological values.</p> <p>How does the proposal meet this? Previous generations had great foresight - and we need to honor that foresight. The proposal does the opposite. The public entrust the WDNR to protect and preserve, not ruin. Where are future generations to go to view, study, listen, smell, and enjoy natural or local landscapes in an unfragmented fashion.</p> <p>Based on the link provided by the Peninsula Pulse local newspaper <a href="https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/82111">https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/82111</a> I was not able to locate an evaluation/assessment of the proposal nor any specifics. I don't understand how a non-Newport use is allowed into a 'master plan'.</p> <p>I do not want to encounter horses on my walks; and I don't feel safe around horses. In addition, horses smell bad – the odor will detract from my experience. What about the horse waste? - in a 'wild park'. I assume the vehicles to transport horses and riders will be powered by petroleum based products, maybe diesel. Again, sounds and smells not associated with a 'wild' park. Invasive species concern – from both horse waste, riders, gear, and the altering and cutting of native/local vegetation for trails.</p>

	<p>Suggestion: the horse people pool their own funds and purchase land acreage suitable for riding – land already altered by human influence, like agricultural land. Also, there are riding opportunities through existing stable/s in Door County on existing trails. Or how about the horse people partnering with existing [or previously existing] stables to ‘rent’ or use the stables’ trails. There are other options for riding horses.</p> <p>There are not other options for walking, studying, and observing a unique flora and fauna, and landscape setting. Once its gone, its gone.</p> <p>In summary, the horse trails are contrary to the “designed use” and vision of Newport, and it’s too great a risk to the rest of the park by allowing horses. Newport is the only park like it and the proposal jeopardizes the entire park for a small portion of society that has other options available to them.</p> <p>Horses do <b>NOT</b> belong in Newport.</p>
81	<p>This seems like a good idea without having much impact on other uses or the environment of the park.</p>
82	<p>I highly recommend allowing the area of expansion of the horse trail in Newport State Park. I am a Door County native and have had horses most of my life. We are becoming ever more restricted where we can ride as the county is being built up. We are at the point of having to trailer out of the county to actually enjoy nature on horseback.</p>
83	<p>I am sending this email in regards to the proposed equestrian trails at Newport State Park. As a Door County Resident, I absolutely would love to see something like this come to our county! My husband and I buy State Park stickers every year. It would be so nice to have something just for horses closer to use; instead of having to drive far to ride. Equestrians in Door County are the only group that do not have a type of trail designated for use. Ultimately, we just want to be able to ride safely. On the road, we have to worry about traffic and being hit by a car. On the Ahnapee, we have to worry about bikers and walkers with dogs not yielding to the horse. While we try our hardest to control our horses in situations like this we cannot control the cars or others and how they directly affect us by their actions.</p>
84	<p>I would like to extend my support for the variance, I am extremely pleased to see inclusion and hopefully expansion of equine trails. I would hope that you would voluntarily seek out the opinions of local equestrian trail riding groups for future DNR Master plans. I hope that the Native American Community management is also pleased with the variance plans. I certainly appreciate the objectives 1 &amp; 2 listed on page 5 of the document,</p>
85	<p>I am writing to you in regards to the addition of equestrian trails in Newport State Park. I have read the proposals and the variance you are proposing for the area.</p> <p>You want to expand trails in the park without a trail map plan. Not sure how you can expand without knowing exactly where you will put the trail.</p>

	<p>Was an environmental impact study done to see what could happen with erosion and other factors?</p> <p>Your plan states you want to maintain and enhance the wild character of the property. How can you if you do not know exactly where you will build the trails.</p> <p>One of your management objectives is to provide opportunities for solitude and remoteness. Would this idea be better accomplished in the larger Penninsula State Park.</p> <p>Finally, I am not sure how you can plan without a plan. Generalities do not make a plan.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and service to the State. Hopefully you are not like the Executive Branch of this country and will listen to what people comment on and consider them.</p>
86	<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Newport State Park equestrian trail expansion. As a former horse owner, I understand the joy and frustration that privilege brings. Trail riding is fun, and a big part of horse ownership, especially for those who ride for pleasure versus competitively. It is also expensive to keep and board a horse, and if one's riding experience is limited, well, that spoils the fun.</p> <p>I understand why a local group of horse owners/riders would like to see more trails in Door County and I support trail expansion for private use (with mandatory permits/fees/regulations). I also understand and appreciate questions and concerns being raised regarding costs, maintenance and environmental impact associated with an expanded trail system. Those issues, I am fairly confident, can be worked out through open dialogue and an agreement between all the parties involved. I do not wish to see an expanded trail system, however, if it opens the door for commercial/tourist businesses to exploit Newport State Park for profit.</p> <p>The concern I have is commercial operators running trail rides out of the park, i.e., commercial operators trailing in horses everyday and having groups meet there for trail rides. That's much different than providing the local riding community and visiting horse owners access to more trails in Door County. The impact on the park will be much different if for-profit businesses bring inexperienced horseback riders on to a delicate trail system.</p> <p>I support the expanded trail system as a park feature beneficial to the local equestrian/riding community, not those seeking to profit from it.</p>
87	<p>The proposed variance to the present trail plan expanding the length to “up to 10 miles” would only further fragment the existing hardwood forest canopy with the proposed 8’ wide trail. At present, many volunteers work diligently to keep Invasives controlled along the existing trail system. This plan would introduce not only soil disturbance, but seed bearing horse droppings that would further expand Invasives into the heart of presently undisturbed forest.</p> <p>As for the idea that the trail would increase park use and add revenue, the present staffing level doesn’t fill the need to adequately man the visitor center to collect fees now. Self registration does not work. On a busy summer day I have counted less than half of the cars parked in lot 3 have any registration tickets on their dashes.</p>

	<p>Parking lot size is also to be considered. How much forest habitat is to be lost for accommodating 3-4 horse trailers and a “grass area “ ? The actual size is not specifically addressed. The variance locates the parking at the gravel/sand pit, that at present the native pines have slowly started to reclaim. This is still habitat.</p> <p>The combined equestrian/hiking trail is also problematic for the reason that many hikers take their dogs. Whether allowed or not, it happens . Horse / dog confrontations are unpredictable and can be dangerous.</p> <p>For these reasons, I feel the trail expansion this variance proposes would not be a positive addition to the park and nor to the visitors that enjoy its natural diversity.</p>
88	<p>I am writing in support of the proposed amendment to the 2018 master plan of Wisconsin’s Newport State Park to expand the equestrian trail mileage as well as areas of access. Currently, significant portions of the area set aside for equestrian trail development is highly unsuitable for safe natural single tread trail development as it is highly fissured and is probably why it has never been developed before. It was barely safe to navigate on foot. The areas being considered would allow the development of an equestrian trail of significant length with safe, solid natural base tread.</p> <p>Thank you for recognizing this safety as well as quality issue by adopting the amendment to expand the areas of access. As a founding member of the local equestrian group that has petitioned and committed to partnering with the DNR or local authorities for the past 20 years, I am thankful that the DNR is considering a more suitable and expanded area for the opportunity to develop a quality, sustainable, natural tread single track equestrian trail in Newport State Park.</p>
89	<p>Have been lifelong (79 yrs of age) resident of NE WI, west of Appleton, always loved riding my horses.</p> <p>When Newport equestrian trails are approved (must be trail length of at least 6-7 miles), it will worthwhile for us to travel 2+ hours to northern Door County.</p> <p>I am a member of a equestrian trail riding group numbering over 200 members. We are named Saddle bags &amp; have been WI DNR approved for last 4-5 yrs as Adopt-a-Trail designee for 7 miles of equestrian trails at Hartman Creek State Park, Waupaca. Saddle bags participates in selling State Trail Passes ...nearly 300 in 2022 for Friends of Hartman Creek resulting in 20% of each sale remaining at Hartman. On good weather weekends the parking lot is filled with trucks &amp; trailers of horseback riding people. Wouldn't that be a benefit to Newport St Pk....more income for the Park from vehicle stickers, trailless passes, as well as income for the community in fuel sales, restaurants, etc.</p> <p>When you review financial info from state parks offering equestrian trails.....North &amp; South Kettle Moraine, Wild Cat, Governor Dodge, Gov Knowles, etc.....you will see what a benefit this provides to all involved....</p> <p>Again, day riding opportunities of suitable mileage will be beneficial to all. There must be statistics available on number of miles of trails most acceptable.</p>

	<p>Thanks for all your work as well as Newport State Park staff, regional &amp; state DNR and Door County local horseback riding club.</p>
<p>90</p>	<p>I am responding to the request made for a variance to the horse trail addition in the Master Plan for Newport State Park. I am not in favor of this variance for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Newport State Park occupies a relatively small space and as a wilderness park is primarily invested in preserving the area as a minimally developed, quiet and immersive wilderness experience. The park also preserves an ecosystem for native species that are endangered or in decline. The addition of a longer horse trail would reduce the space that is wild and have a lasting negative impact on the park due to removal of trees for the trail and the potential need to trim and remove trees on existing trails to accommodate horse traffic. This will degrade the wilderness experience for everyone using the park. There simply is not enough room for this development at Newport.</li> <li>- Newport State Park receives very little funding from the state. Maintenance of the existing structures and trails has been scanty. There has been degradation of structures, including a roof failure in one shelter by parking lot 2, and the large shelter at parking lot 3 needs extensive work on the roof, the chimney and the grill. The trails have also been neglected. Invasive species are growing in the the park and nothing is being done by the state. If the state cannot provide funding and resources to maintain what is already in the park, why would they want to add more infrastructure to the park. This does not seem like a logical action. Maintain what is already there. Don't add more until the existing park structures and trails are properly maintained.</li> <li>- The plans for where the horse trail will go, how much it will overlap existing trails, and who will provide support for keeping the trail and new proposed structures maintained (restrooms, hitching posts, the trail itself) has not been provided to the public. What will be the impact on wildlife, existing forest canopy, water management, erosion, etc.? None of this has been addressed. Without knowing exactly what is being planned and how it will be cared for and maintained, and how this will affect the park environment, how could the public approve this variance. Again, a rational decision can't be made without understanding these details.</li> </ul> <p>Thank you for your careful consideration of these and all the concerns brought forward by others. I sincerely hope that you will have not choice but to reject this variance.</p>
<p>91</p>	<p>I object to approval of the Horse Trial Plan Variance for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposal's assumption that the areas affected are not those where people go to seek solitude is without foundation. The proposal doesn't define the exact location of the expanded trails but, in any event, horse trails are inconsistent with the purpose of a wilderness park.</li> <li>2. The proposal says nothing about responsibility for maintaining new or shared trails. The park is short of funds for maintaining existing infrastructure as it is. Who is going to pay for trail maintenance due to horses using hiking trails?</li> </ol>

	<p>3. I believe the request for a variance is a misuse of the procedure by which horse trails were initially approved. I find it hard to believe that the equestrian organizations seeking the trails didn't know that the length of the trails initially sought were insufficient.</p> <p>4. The proposal will necessitate tree and canopy clearing.</p>
92	<p>I am writing to express my concern about the concept of creating horse riding trails at Newport State Park. I have been a frequent visitor to the park for over 25 years and appreciate how the visitor experience at Newport contrasts with other Door County state parks. We are fortunate to have parks that meet many different recreational needs. Newport provides a near-wilderness experience and I do not think that horse trails are a good fit for this park.</p> <p>I am aware that hiking trail maintenance and overall park maintenance increasingly rely upon volunteer help. Is there a plan for maintaining horse trails? And if approved, how will the creation of such trails and facilities for horse trailers be funded? When will such plans be presented to the public?</p> <p>I am also concerned about potential ecological impacts. I am a participant in a DNR-sponsored citizen science project in Door County. The Frog &amp; Toad survey monitors the health of streams and shoreline environments. The lack of information on the possible location of the horse trails raises red flags for me. We should know the possible trail locations first and then assess how contiguous SNA and watersheds might be affected by them BEFORE the trails are discussed, let alone implemented.</p> <p>In general, it seems we are working with vague or incomplete information with which to make decisions about the horse trails. Newport Park includes sensitive natural areas that deserve special attention before we allow equine access. I hope the horse trails will not be established.</p>
93	<p>thank you for taking comments on the proposal to install equestrian access and trail system infrastructure in Newport State Park.</p> <p>i like horses a lot, but i really have to question how horses fit in to this "Wilderness Park". to live up to that designation, Newport should be more left alone than added to.</p> <p>the maps are not clear exactly what areas are being considered for this additional infrastructure. there are nice alvar habitats that have developed in old gravel quarries on the Peninsula including at least one in Newport State Park that i am aware of. is the proposed parking lot going to bulldoze one of these rare alvar habitat areas?</p> <p>will there be extra monitoring for potential new invasive plants species at the parking lot and along new trails?</p> <p>our Parks are, on the average, receiving more love than we are keeping up with. we need more investment in Park care and maintenance. let us focus more efforts on ecosystem restoration projects, like converting the sterile grass areas at Newport back to native canopy. i know a small effort to do some of this is in the works. let's redouble our efforts in areas like this.</p>



94	<p>The impact of horse trails and the associated development proposed to support them is incongruent with a wilderness area. The trails present numerous impacts to the park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horses create ecological impacts and disruption to the park. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spread of invasive species</li> <li>○ Impacts to native vegetation</li> <li>○ Damage to soils, including compaction and/or erosion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The variance proposal does not include a map showing where the horse trail will be located to assess and understand impacts to environment, park trails and facilities.</li> <li>• Horses produce large amounts of manure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Manure will add nitrogen to the soil and runoff</li> <li>○ Has the potential impact to groundwater and nearby private wells been studied? What is the impact?</li> <li>○ Manure will create unsanitary conditions for people using any portions of the trails</li> <li>○ Manure will likely not remain constrained to the trails and spread onto the local public roadways</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There is no estimate provided showing how many riders would use the horse trails. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Trails may likely benefit only a few users of the park</li> <li>○ Conversely, providing horse trails presents a potential opportunity for private businesses to deliver rented horses if not specifically prohibited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential for even higher usage and increased ecological disruption to the park</li> <li>▪ Inexperienced riders that don't control horses properly, increasing impact and damage to the environment and to safety of people using any portions of the trail</li> <li>▪ Creates profit for private businesses at the expense of the park's environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• No plan has been presented for the funding of the trail construction and ongoing maintenance.</li> <li>• No plan has been presented for DNR oversight and monitoring of activity at the parking lot and facilities, any restrictions of their use and enforcement thereof, nor the funding for these critical activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Whether the parking lot and facilities will be restricted to equestrian users is not stated. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If restricted, how will the restriction be accomplished?</li> <li>▪ A parking area and facilities that is not effectively limited to equestrian users creates another, developed general visitor area within the park</li> <li>▪ If access is not restricted, the location away from the main visitor center of the park and clear DNR presence makes the area likely to become a "public restroom" used by anyone</li> <li>▪ Parking that can accommodate vehicles with horse trailers is also capable of accommodating snowmobile trailers</li> <li>▪ If not restricted, this could increase use trail that is adjacent to and in spots crosses park and nearby private property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Motorsports are not a goal of the wilderness area</li> <li>▪ Necessitates additional oversight and maintenance of the facilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Enforcement of parking rules and park fees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Violations of parking restrictions and non-payment of park fees are observed at Parking Lot #4 and N. Newport Ln., it's reasonable to expect the same will occur at a new parking area and must be addressed</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No plan has been presented for the funding of the construction and ongoing maintenance of the parking lot and facilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regular cleaning of facilities</li> <li>○ Pit toilets vs. septic is not noted</li> <li>○ Litter removal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signage is not fully effective, considerable litter has been observed at Parking Lot #3 and to a lesser extent at Parking Lot #4, it's reasonable to expect the same will occur at a new parking area and must be addressed</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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