

Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area

Planning and Development



Trail systems have been studied across the country and have been proven to make a positive economic impact on the surrounding communities. The livelihood of the surrounding communities is improved with enhanced health, recreation and quality of life. Trail development helps preserve both cultural and natural resources in the area. It provides educational opportunities for people to get out and learn about the resource. The Pembina Gorge has potential to provide all of the above if development is done in a sustainable, ecologically friendly way. In 2005, Governor Hoeven allocated money to study and create a master plan for trail development in the Turtle Mountain and Pembina Gorge Areas.

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) riding opportunities in North Dakota were basically non-existent. The need to increase legal OHV opportunities is based on the rising sale of OHVs, the increased demand for riding opportunities, the limited number of legal riding opportunities, and the impacts of illegal use. The Pembina Gorge was identified as a starting point for trail development in the state in response to the volume of OHV activity already present, the land owners calling for a solution to mitigate the impact to their lands, and to protect state lands set aside for other purposes.

In light of the study and master plan, the North Dakota State Parks and Recreation Department, in cooperation with the North Dakota Forest Service, North Dakota Game and Fish Department and local land owners, is currently in the process of developing the Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area. In 2007 a project manager was hired to assess the situation, inventory the trails in the area, identify a sustainable trail corridor for a multiuse trail system, and manage the lands associated. The primary goal of the recreation area is to protect public and private lands by limiting illegal OHV use in the Pembina Gorge through development of a managed multiuse trail corridor open to the public. This trail will provide the public a place to legally ride and enjoy the Pembina Gorge for all it has to offer.



A Recreation Trail Program grant funded through the Federal Highway Administration was received this year for \$138,864.22 which will help in construction of new and exciting trails in the recreation area. The NDPRD has acquired additional property with existing trails and also worked with NDGF on a land management exchange to consolidate scattered parcels of land into a continuous land base to facilitate trail development. Using the new trails and existing trails, the goal is to create a loop system that will provide an enjoyable, legal riding opportunity for the citizens of North Dakota, while relieving the burden of land owners having to deal with unwanted OHV traffic on their property.



In areas where crossing private land is necessary, NDPRD has developed a trail lease program to acquire easements of a corridor in exchange for payment based on miles of trail. As of fall 2010, the trail corridor has been identified and portions of the trail have been laid out and cleared in preparation for construction.

Non-motorized recreation, i.e. hiking, biking, equestrian, is also an important facet of the Pembina Gorge Recreation Area. In 2009, the NDPRD assumed recreation management of the Tetrault Woods State Forest. A grant was received for approximately \$48,000 to build a trailhead and reroute and rehabilitate the trails in the state forest. In accordance with NDFS policy, these trails are designated as non-motorized with the exception of snowmobiles from December 1st to March 31st along the designated state snowmobile trail. More non-motorized opportunities will come as progress moves forward.