THE GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL & LINEAR RECREATIONAL SYSTEMS

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS OVERVIEW
THE GITCHI-GAMI TRAIL & LINEAR RECREATIONAL SYSTEMS:

The Gitchi-Gami Trail runs from Two Harbors to Garand Marais moving through a landscape rich in natural beauty and historic significance. Running parallel to the trail are the many linear recreational systems present on the North Shore. Even though these systems often run parallel to each other, the connections between them are weak or do not exist. The design investigations explored opportunities to create linkages that strengthen the region as network of recreational amenities that can be accessed from communities.

THE NORTH SHORE STATE TRAIL:

This 146 mile natural surface trail from Duluth to Grand Marais provides multiple opportunities for recreation along the North Shore. Primarily used by snowmobiles, it traverses St. Louis, Lake, and Cook counties in northeastern Minnesota. The trail winds its way through the forests behind the outer bluffs that overlook Lake Superior, and provides access to some of the most rugged and beautiful scenery in Minnesota. The trail also connects the Grants-In-Aid (GIA) trails at Silver Bay, Beaver Bay, Finland, Tofte, and Lutsen, as well as numerous local trails, created and maintained by local snowmobile clubs. http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_trails/north_shore/index.html

THE SUPERIOR HIKING TRAIL:

The Superior Hiking Trail is a 205-mile long footpath that follows the rocky ridgeline above Lake Superior in northeastern Minnesota. It begins just north of Two Harbors, MN, and ends just before the Canadian border. The trail has 30 trailheads and 81 backcountry campsites making it ideal for both day hikes and backpacking. There are no fees, reservations or permits required to hike or backpack on the trail. http://www.shta.org/

THE NORTH SHORE SCENIC DRIVE:

The North Shore Scenic Drive has been awarded All-American Road status from Duluth to Grand Portage, based on its recreational and scenic qualities. The citation describes the North Shore as some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, wedged between the rugged Superior Highlands and the vast expanse of a shining inland sea. High quality experiences abound with unlimited opportunities to enjoy the outdoors along one of the greatest trail systems in the nation. The North Shore is one of the primary destinations for recreational driving in the Midwest. The unique geography, spectacular topography, diversity of habitat, and colorful heritage of its settlers combines to tell the story of a rich history, deeply rooted in plentiful natural resources, and dotted with innumerable points of interest giving visitors a reason to come back and visit again and again.

THE LAKE SUPERIOR WATER TRAIL:

Established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1993, the Minnesota portion of the Lake Superior Water Trail will eventually extend from the St. Louis Bay in Duluth to the Pigeon River on the Canadian border, a distance of approximately 150 miles. Cooperative efforts in Ontario, Wisconsin, Michigan, and First Nations will develop a water trail completely around Lake Superior, primarily for use by sea kayakers. The development and maintenance of the Water Trail is a joint effort of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Lake Superior Water Trail Association of Minnesota. http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/kayaking/lswt/about.html

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE (USFS) TRAILS:

The United States Forest Service (USFS) trails include the Sawbill Trail in Tofte, the Caribou Trail in Lutsen, the Gunflint Trail in Grand Marais, and the Arrowhead Trail near Hovland. These roads are the major trails leading inland and providing access to the BWCA from the shore of Lake Superior.
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS ANALYSIS OVERVIEW:

Through the use of GIS technologies hundreds of data layers were analyzed and organized into thematic maps. This layering of information, research, and analysis formed the foundation and tools needed for the planning and design. By documenting and studying the multiple assets and themes, a holistic approach to the corridor design was developed that responds to the ecological, cultural, historic, and economic sustainability issues of the region. A regional resource analysis was made of the length of the Gitchi-Gami Trail from Two Harbors to Grand Marais and included the following base data layers:

- Bedrock Geology
- Surficial Geology
- Topography
- Infrastructure
- Elevation
- Ecology
- Development
- Infrastructure
- Historic Structures
- Hydrology
- Original Vegetation
- National Wetlands Inventory
- Native Plant Communities
- Biological Diversity
- Ecological Class
- FEMA Floodplains
- Landforms
- County Well Index
- Transportation
- User Needs
- Utilities
- Water Quality
- Land Use
- Land Cover
- Population Change from 1990 - 2000
- Gap Land Ownership

These layers were used as the basis from which an ecological understanding of this region was derived. The maps produced from these layers include: Geology, Topography, Hydrology, Original Vegetation, Ecology, Landcover, Development, Infrastructure, Land Ownership, Historic Structures, and Recreational Sites. These thematic maps and a brief description of each are found in the index pages 58-81.